



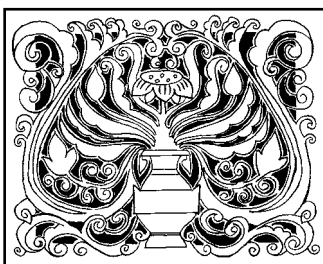
# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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## Contents



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1 January  
The Contemplat

# TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*

## Rājadharmā: Governance

November 2007

Vol. 112, No. 11

आ त्वा गन् राष्ट्रं सह वर्चसोदिहि प्राङ् विशां पतिरेकराट् त्वं वि राज ।  
सर्वास्त्वा राजन् प्रदिशो ह्वयन्तूपसद्यो नमस्यो भवेह ॥

To you has come the kingship with its splendour on; shine as lord, sole ruler of the people. King! let all regions of the heavens invite you; let people wait on you and pay respect to you. (Atharva Veda, 3.4.1)

त्वां विशो वृणतां राज्याय त्वामिमाः प्रदिशः पञ्च देवीः ।  
वर्षन् राष्ट्रस्य ककुदि श्रयस्व ततो न उग्रो वि भजा वसूनि ॥

You the people shall elect unto kingship; you these five divine directions. Rest at the height of royal power, at the pinnacle; from there, mighty one, share the treasures. (3.4.2)

आन्वीक्षिकीं त्रयीं वार्ता दण्डनीतिं च पार्थिवः ।  
तद्विद्यैस्तत्क्रियोपेतैश्चिन्तयेद्विनयान्वितः ॥

Logic and metaphysics, the three Vedas, the professions (agriculture, animal husbandry, and trade), governance and law—these sciences and the practitioners thereof the ruler shall employ to arrive at considered decisions.

जलूकावत्पिवेद्राष्ट्रं मृदुनैव नराधिपः ।  
व्याघ्रीवापहरेत्पुत्रं न दंशेन्नच पीडयेत् ॥

The ruler is to drink of the state [collect taxes] as mildly as the leech (drinks blood) or (as carefully) as the tigress carries its child—without biting or causing hurt.

स्त्रियः सपुरुषा मार्गं सर्वालङ्कारसंयुताः ।  
निर्भयाः प्रतिपद्यन्ते यदा रक्षति भूमिपः ॥

When women, in all their jewellery, can move on the streets with men, without any fear, then is the state (truly) protected by the ruler.

# THIS MONTH

Politics, history, and law are three important components of the social sciences which, as derivatives as well as determinants of society, both influence and record the course of civilizations. As our philosophical reflections touch upon these issues, we have occasion to remember an important area of study: **Politics, History, and Swami Vivekananda.**

Though political philosophy is traditionally considered a Western discipline, India has had a long and chequered tradition of political thinking. Various aspects of this tradition—both ancient and modern—form the subject of Prof. Ashok S Chousalkar's article **Political Philosophy: The Indian Perspective.** The author heads the department of political science at Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

Prof. Ganapathy Subbiah of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture, and Archaeology at Vishwa-Bharati, Shantiniketan, takes a fresh look at historiography as a Western discipline and at what genuine 'Indian' historiography could possibly look like in his article **In Search of an 'Indian' Philosophy of History.**

Law is no more a mere instrument of governance, it is a tool for shaping global culture and ensuring the rights and dignity of individuals and groups. How legal thinking is shaping today's world is shown by Dr N L Mitra in **Social Seismography in Indian Legal Philosophy.** The author is former Director, National Law School, and Founder Vice Chancellor, National Law University, Bangalore.



**Sir Charles Wilkins's Fundamental Contribution to Indology in the West** lies in his translation of the Bhagavadgita and his efforts to make other Sanskrit texts available to Eng-

lish readers. Swami Tathagatanandaji, Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society, New York, provides a glimpse into the pioneering efforts of Sir Charles Wilkins.

Dr Bimal Kumar Roy, Head, Department of History, Rampurhat College, Birbhum, shares some thoughts on a pioneering figure in the modernization of India in **Raja Rammohan Roy: His Political Views.**

Varanasi has held a peculiar charm for the spiritually inclined as well as men and women devoted to art and culture. The city has been home to numerous such celebrities—both legendary and historical. Some of them are at the focus of the second instalment of Swami Varishthanandaji's narrative, **Varanasi: The City of Saints, Sages, and Savants.** The author is a monastic member of the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Varanasi.



Dr Dipak Sengupta, former Chief General Manager, Coal India Limited, concludes his account of **Walking the Buddha Path** at Kushinagar, the site of Buddha's *parinirvana*, after a brief walk through the monasteries of Lumbini.



The religious and political history of Jerusalem is both instructive and sobering, for it is the story of perpetual conflict as well as that of the indomitable human will to survive and overcome conflicts. Dr Saibal

Gupta, a surgeon and cultural historian, muses on the past and future of this city as he concludes his portrayal of **Jerusalem: Crossroads of History.**

# *Politics, History, and Swami Vivekananda*

**S**WAMI Vivekananda categorically dissociated his work from politics. 'I am no politician or political agitator,' he announced, 'I care only for the Spirit. ... No political significance be ever attached falsely to any of my writings or sayings.' It is therefore curious that, as Amiya P Sen puts it, there is a view 'now deeply embedded in nationalist historiography, that for Vivekananda, religion was some kind of surrogate for active political work and that his religious utterances are imbued with blatant political messages'.

Swami Vivekananda has been widely viewed as a 'patriot' and a 'nationalist,' but his views on politics were far more complex and his vision far more global than what is traditionally connoted by these terms. Romain Rolland had noted that 'the Indian nationalist movement smouldered for a long time until Vivekananda's breath blew the ashes into flame and erupted violently three years after his death in 1905'. To Hemchandra Ghosh, one of the youthful 'revolutionaries' who met him at Dhaka in 1901, Swami Vivekananda appeared to be 'more a political prophet than a religious leader'. But the four-fold programme that Swamiji gave to Hemchandra and his colleagues had a remarkable social content: 'Going-in among the masses, eradication of don't-touchism, opening of gymnasium[s], and [initiation of the] library movement'.

Questioned in London in 1896 about the Indian National Congress, Swamiji said, 'My work is in another part of the field. But I regard the movement as significant, and heartily wish it success. A nation is being made out of India's different races.' Lala Lajpat Rai is reported to have attributed to Swamiji the honour of 'creating a new spirit of national tolerance, so that since his death Indian patriots have gradually freed themselves from the ancient prejudices of caste and family'. Swamiji was also 'among

the earliest thinkers to claim the Indo-Islamic period as part of India's heritage'. He believed that the changes India was then witnessing would lead to 'homogeneity, in her acquiring what we may call democratic ideas. Intelligence must not remain the monopoly of the cultured few; it will be disseminated from higher to lower classes.'

It was Swami Vivekananda's emphasis on the material uplift of the Indian poor that led the sociologist Benoy Sarkar to suggest that 'Vivekananda was the father of modern materialism in India as Immanuel Kant was the father of modern materialism in the West'. According to Ainslee Embree, 'at a time when some of the strongest voices in India were equating any accommodation with Western ideas as an attack on the traditional religious values of India, Vivekananda argued that science was neutral; it could enrich, not weaken, Indian life'.

Swamiji famously said, 'I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread'; and Subhas Chandra Bose added that 'Vivekananda's socialism did not derive its birth from the books of Karl Marx. It has its origin in the thought and culture of India'.

According to Nimai Sadhan Basu, 'Vivekananda's historical analysis and foresight were truly remarkable. His prophetic predictions about the coming upheavals in Russia and China, the outbreak of the First World War, and the independence of India, are to be explained by his possession of this faculty.' 'We are to solve the problems of the Sudra [labouring and backward classes],' Swamiji told Sister Nivedita, 'but oh, through what tumults!' Can Swamiji's insights help us make better sense of the changing class and caste equations in Indian politics, the turmoil over reservations, and the spectre of Naxalite violence? If so, then they might be worth a relook.



# ***Political Philosophy: The Indian Perspective***

**Prof. Ashok S Chousalkar**

IT is often thought that political philosophy is essentially a Western discipline, and that the East has nothing substantial to contribute to it. But these beliefs are not true: India has had a robust and rich tradition of political thinking right from the time of the Vedas and Upanishads. Indians not only developed several theories regarding the nature of the state but also made experiments with different forms of state. Some Western scholars have expressed the opinion that democracy was an innovation of the West and that Asian countries lacked knowledge of the concept of democracy. The traditional Indian state has often been characterized in past centuries as 'oriental despotism'. But if we carefully go through the historical development of political ideas in ancient India, we will find that the concept of Swaraj, self government, constantly inspired the Indian mind. From the Vedas and Upanishads, through the writings of Jnaneshwara and Shivaji, to the political ideas of Tilak, Aurobindo, and Gandhi, Swaraj has been constantly discussed.

In the present article, we shall briefly discuss a few salient features of Indian political philosophy. We shall first discuss ancient Indian political philosophy, and then some views of modern Indian political thinkers. The politics of medieval India was dominated by Islamic thought. Discussion on Islamic political thought, however, is beyond the scope of this article.

### **Arthaśāstra and Rājānīti**

The discipline of political science emerged in the seventh century BCE in the thought of wandering teachers, ministers of kings, and free thinkers. In ancient India, the science of politics and governance was known variously as *rājaśāstra*, *rājadharma*, *rājānīti*, *daṇḍanīti*, *nītiśāstra*, and *arthaśāstra*. Of

these, *daṇḍanīti* and *arthaśāstra* were the two most ancient terms. *Arthaśāstra* was a compendium of instructions to rulers about the governance of the state. It claimed to deal with the science of acquisition and preservation of territory in order to ensure the life and security of common subjects. The state was necessary for civilized life, and without it there would be anarchy and lawlessness. So to replace the rule of 'might' with the rule of 'right', the establishment of state was felt to be a necessity.

Political science was a part of philosophy. It was thought of as applied philosophy, because Indians conceived of politics as an empirical science or *dṛṣṭārtha smṛti*, as its basic rules were derived from practical experience. Indians viewed life in totality. They defined three mundane goals of life (the *puruṣārthas*)—dharma, artha, and kama—and artha dealt with politics. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is one of the best ancient works on the science of politics. Kautilya argued that the ideal of artha or material gain should be pursued along with dharma and kama, and that excessive emphasis on any one ideal was harmful. He also dwelt on the four *vidyās* (sciences)—*trayī* (the three Vedas, metaphysics), *ānvikṣikī* (logical philosophy), *vārtā* (economics), and *daṇḍa-nīti* (politics)—and suggested that the study of each of these was equally important. According to Kautilya, philosophy was an important science as it illuminated all other sciences. He asked the king to study the philosophies of Sankhya, Yoga, and Lokayata.

### **Dharma and Anuśāsana**

In the Mahabharata, after the great war was over, Yudhishtira was overtaken by grief when he learnt that Karna was his elder brother. He decided to abandon the kingdom he had just conquered and return to the forest. Draupadi, Arjuna, Bhima, Vya-

sa, and Krishna tried to dissuade him by arguing that as a kshatriya, it was his duty to govern his kingdom. But they could not convince him. It was Bhishma, the grand old man of the Bharata tribe, who was finally able to convince Yudhishtira that it was imperative for him to perform his royal duties, for this conferred great benefit to people. Emphasizing the primary importance of kingly duties, Bhishma said that as the footprints of the elephant subsumed all other animal footprints, similarly, the duties of the king, *rājadharma*, subsumed all other duties. It was only when the king performed his duties properly that dharma prospered.

The Mahabharata is of the opinion that, in the ultimate analysis, dharma is based on truth and righteousness, and that the world is held together by dharma. Yudhishtira said that one should follow dharma not because it was beneficial but because everyone was duty-bound to do so. Bhishma told him that the duties of the state as well as the duties of the citizen were the result of a 'social contract' between human beings. It was his contention that *samaya* or mutual contract between human beings was the basis of state. Those people who, when powerful, thought dharma to be the invention of the weak, remembered dharma when they were in difficulty. Hence, observance of dharma was necessary for the orderly course of life. It is argued in the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* that dharma is the 'controller [even] of the kshatriyas and with the help of dharma a weak person could rule over the powerful'.

In ancient India, good governance was called *anuśāsana*; its purpose was not to discipline people but to effect continuous improvement in the moral behaviour of the individual. A Jataka story drives home this point. The king of an ancient Indian kingdom was given to the continual performance of sacrifices. He sacrificed a larger number of animals. Due to the excessive workload, slaves and workers in his service were dissatisfied. His kingdom was infested with bandits and robbers who created problems of law and order. One of the ministers of the king, who was a bodhisattva and who represented the political ideas of Gautama Bud-

लोकरञ्जनमेवात्र राज्ञां धर्म सनातनः ।

सत्यस्य रक्षणं चैव व्यवहारस्य चार्जवम् ॥

The traditional dharma of the ruler is to (attend to) the happiness of the people; and also to protect the (cause of) truth and rectitude in mutual dealings.

dha, told the king that he was unable to eradicate banditry despite the use of force because nobody was happy in his kingdom. He advised the king to stop bloody sacrifices and dispense with the heavy expenditure that this incurred. The king should not kill bandits but should give them cattle, seeds, and finances to till the land with profit. He should have them properly rehabilitated. The Jataka tells us that the king accepted his advice, and as a result, the kingdom prospered, robbery ended, and everyone, including slaves and workers, were happy. Thus, the policies adopted by the king were responsible for bringing about improvement in the lives of people and for setting them on the path of righteousness. This is the essence of *anuśāsana*.

Ancient Indians were of the view that an important aspect of *anuśāsana* was the willingness of the people to accept the rule of their king and not take law in their own hands. This is called Shankha-Likhita Nyaya or the 'logic of Shankha and Likhita.' The Mahabharata tells us that Shankha and Likhita were two brothers who lived in their respective hermitages performing penance. One day when Shankha had gone to the river for bathing, Likhita visited his hermitage. He saw many fruit-bearing trees and plucked a few ripe fruits without taking his brother's permission. When Shankha came to know about it, he admonished Likhita. Likhita apologized and requested that he be suitably punished. Shankha said that he did not have the right to punish anyone; only the king had this right. Likhita went to King Sudyumna, confessed his guilt, and requested punishment. Initially the king was not ready to punish Likhita, but on his insistence, ordered his hands cut off. After suffering the punishment, Likhita went to take a bath in a river, and his hands were miraculously restored. It was Shankha who had effected this miracle through his

yogic powers. Thus, the Mahabharata is of the view that punishing the guilty is the king's duty, that one should not take the law in one's hands; and second, that by suffering punishment for one's transgression the moral sin is also expiated. If this expiation is undergone with acceptance of the wrong, it cures one of guilt. So, Shankha-Likhita Nyaya is the heart of *anuśāsana*.

### Gana-sanghas

In ancient India, there were many self-governing republics called Gana-sanghas. The Gana-sangha polity existed in ancient India for nearly a thousand years. Great religious teachers like Krishna, Mahavira, and Gautama Buddha were born in these republics and were great supporters of democratic forms of governance. A general spirit of freedom was prevalent in ancient India. According to Dr Jayaswal, the Kathas, Vrishnis, Vaishalas [Vrijis], and Shakyas proclaimed philosophies of freedom from death, devas, cruelty, and caste! In the Kathopanishad, Yama told Nachiketa the philosophy of the immortality of the soul; Sri Krishna opposed worship of different gods out of selfish interests and advocated the path of disinterested action; Mahavira stood for compassion and universal peace; and Buddha preached equality, self-control, and right action. These great men opened the path of freedom for humankind. Gautama held that as long as republics followed the path of democracy, they could not be conquered by dictators. Hence, he advised them to take all decisions collectively.

The purpose of the state was to ensure *yoga-kṣema* for all people. *Yoga* means the acquisition of one's own sources of livelihood by legitimate means, and *kṣema* stands for peaceful enjoyment of the same. It was the duty of the state to create such conditions that would allow citizens to earn their livelihood honestly and enjoy the fruits of their hard labour in peace.

### Functions of the State

According to Kautilya, for the state to be able to carry out its functions, it should have a well-developed

governmental machinery, because 'a chariot cannot run on a single wheel'. According to him, the state comprised seven organs or constituent elements: the king, ministers, country, capital city, treasury, army, and allies. All these seven elements were necessary to perform the different specialized duties incumbent upon them. Kautilya contended that it was the king's duty to eliminate the defects of the constituent elements and keep them in a state of readiness. These elements were interdependent. In normal circumstances, the king was the most important component, but the importance of different constituents varied with the circumstances. For example, in times of war, the army became most important, and in times of enemy attack, the fortified capital city assumed primary importance. Allies were not exactly a part of the government, but as friendly powers always ready to help the king, they were of considerable significance.

As ensuring people's welfare was the state's goal, and this required finances, the king had a legitimate right to realize a share of the agricultural produce. This was the revenue he received for extending protection to the subjects. Heavy taxation was denounced, and revenue was to be realized just as a 'bee gleans nectar from flowers'. The king was also supposed to correct his subjects' defects in such manner that they suffered no harm. Bhishma compared this to a washerman washing clothes and removing dirt without affecting the texture and colour of the fabric. The Mahabharata has another analogy: As the sun draws water from oceans, rivers, and tanks and returns the same as rain, similarly, the king should realize taxes from those who can afford to pay them, and use the revenue for the benefit of all.

Indians believed that there is a progressive decline in human morality through each of the four ages that are the units of cosmic cyclic time. Humans progressively declined in virtue from the age of truth, Satya Yuga, to the iron age, Kali. In Satya Yuga there was no need of a state. The Mahabharata suggests that at that time there were no kings and no kingdoms; there was no *danḍa* or punishment

and none to punish, as all people followed the principles of dharma and protected each other. But in the Treta and Dvapara Yugas, there was a gradual decline in dharma, and it became necessary to form states and apply mild forms of punishment. It was only in Kali that capital punishment had to be invoked to keep evil persons in check. All the same, the ideal society was a stateless society where there was no need for *danḍa*. But in this imperfect world, to prevent the 'logic of fishes' from prevailing, the king was to use *danḍa* judiciously. He was to be neither too lenient nor unduly harsh. Just application of *danḍa* was desirable.

Though ancient Indian political thinkers exhorted citizens to respect the authority of the king, this was not an absolute injunction. If the king was unjust, became a slave to passion, lacked self-control, levied heavy taxes, or oppressed the populace, then he had no right to continue as king. The Mahabharata exhorts subjects to come together and kill tyrant kings, much as a mad dog is to be killed. Kautilya gives several examples of kings who perished due to the aforementioned vices.

The state in ancient India allowed great freedom to local bodies. Sri Aurobindo has rightly characterized ancient Indian politics as a very complex system of self-determination and self-government. The essence of *rājanīti* was to endow people with strength and confidence. Therefore, *abhaya* or fearlessness was seen as the essence of functional dharma. In times of adversity, people were free to resort to means that at other times would not be considered dharmic, to preserve themselves. The Mahabharata emphasizes the need to be free of fear, especially the fear of kings, thieves, and clever people.

In the Mahabharata, there is discussion on the nature of dharma in times of emergency. It was Bhishma's contention that in order to save oneself as well as one's kingdom, the king could resort to amoral methods in times of great trouble. This departure from morality was allowed as an exception. At such times, the king was to exercise his reason and personal judgement, and once his purpose was achieved, he was to continue following

the prescribed path of dharma. This concept of *āpaddharma* shows that Indian political philosophers recognized the complex nature of political actions.

Ancient Indian political thought evolved over a period spanning nearly two thousand years. But this tradition of political thinking started declining after the twelfth century CE, as most Hindu kingdoms were overrun by Islamic conquerors. Political ideas continued to be codified in the Rajadharma sections of the Smritis and in the learned commentaries of scholiasts, but there was no life in these.

There were signs of revival of this political thought when Shivaji established his *svārājya*, and his minister Ramachandra wrote a short treatise on politics. But there was no political philosophy in this text, and he did not explain the meaning of *svārājya*.

### **Rammohan Roy and Swami Vivekananda**

Coming to modern times, Raja Rammohan Roy—who has been called the 'father of modern India'—injected fresh life into Indian political thinking in the nineteenth century by attempting to bring together the democratic ideas of the modern West and the philosophy of Vedanta as preached in the Upanishads. The Raja had notions of establishing a modern democratic state in India and fought against many superstitious and evil practices that were prevalent in the nineteenth century. His was a very broad vision in sympathy with the known major religions of the world. He is regarded as one of the pioneers who ushered in the age of enlightenment in modern India.

Indian political philosophy was given a new meaning and content in the thought of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, who stood firmly rooted in the Indian tradition in declaring that service of humans was service to God, that one should see *janārdana*, God, in *janatā*, the people. Swami Vivekananda supported the cause of democracy and socialism and declared that it was the working class that would be the ruling class in the future.

The main concerns of ancient Indian political philosophers were articulated afresh and also enriched by three great freedom fighters and philosophers of modern India: Sri Aurobindo, Lokmanya Tilak, and Mahatma Gandhi. Each of them was well-grounded in Vedanta and the concept of karma yoga as preached in the Bhagavadgita. Each of them wrote thought-provoking commentaries on the Gita. They interpreted the teachings of the Gita in light of the demand for establishing a modern nation-state in India.

### **Sri Aurobindo**

Sri Aurobindo opposed the fundamental principles of Western political thought, which were based on cleavage and conflict. He held that the primary aim of the Indian state was to unite different sections of society into a living whole, pulsating with new ideas. He put forward the concept of Mother India who represented all individual souls living in India. He wanted Indians to develop their own philosophy of life as well as their own model of political development. He did not want them to be docile pupils of the Occident. It was the bounden duty of all citizens to oppose an unjust government, because injustice only breeds further injustice. In his important work *The Spirit and Form of Indian Polity*, published in 1947, he discussed in detail the essence of ancient Indian polity. It was his contention that the Indian model of state-building was far superior to the Western one because it was a bottom-up structure, a complex union of self-governing communal bodies which enjoyed complete autonomy. Secondly, Indians did not impose change from above, as they tried to effect change from within. It is due to this that there was little opposition to change. A proper balance between continuity and change was established, and the Indian body politic retained its capacity to effect self-renewal. Other civilizations, except perhaps the Chinese, lacked this capacity.

### **Lokmanya Tilak**

Lokmanya Tilak popularized four concepts: Swaraj,

Swadeshi, national education, and boycott. Swaraj for him was self-government. He claimed that with Swaraj everybody would be free and have a right to participate in the government of the country. He demanded national self-determination for all colonized countries and argued that India's freedom would usher in the freedom of other subject countries. He declared that Swaraj was his birthright and he would secure it.

Tilak's greatest contribution was perhaps his erudite commentary on the Gita, the *Gita Rahasya*. In this commentary he argued that the Gita ought to be interpreted in light of the teachings of the Mahabharata. Though the followers of Shankaracharya laid greater emphasis on the path of renunciation, the Gita, in fact, taught the path of selfless action, and sought to combine the path of knowledge and the path of disinterested action. Only the person who had truly acquired self-knowledge could perform selfless action. Hence, while pursuing the path of knowledge, one ought to perform one's assigned duties and not shirk responsibility. Duties are not merely in one's own interest but in the larger interest of society. Duties are meant for *loka saṅgraha*. *Loka saṅgraha* is a complex concept consisting of three components: (i) organizing people who have strayed from the path of dharma or are dispersed; (ii) bringing them over to the proper path of dharma; and (iii) helping them walk the path of righteousness by having them imbibe the principles of dharma. Tilak was of the view that great personalities like Sri Krishna, Sri Ramachandra, Janaka, and Yudhishtira followed this path which leads to liberation. To Janaka, the performance of his royal duties was of utmost importance. Tilak accorded greater importance to wiping the tears from the eyes of the poor and the weak than to personal salvation. Janaka was his ideal.

### **Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave**

Mahatma Gandhi wanted to empower the Indian nation by empowering its people. In his famous book *Hind Swaraj* he questioned Western civilization, which he felt was irreligious. He criticized

British democracy; in his opinion it was thoroughly commercial; its elected leaders looked after their own self-interest. He called the British parliament a chattering shop. He wanted that Swaraj for India in which everyone would enjoy the glow of freedom. He did not want India to copy the Western model of state and democracy. He did not want 'white men' to be replaced by 'dark men' while the British instruments of repression remained intact. He cited the example of Italy: after independence, Mazzini was not happy because the independent Italy for which he had fought was not a democratic state; it had been captured by domestic vested interests!


Gandhi wanted the state to be freed of its coercive elements and sought to instil fearlessness in the minds of people. In his concept of Swaraj, there was decentralization of power and India was to be a confederation of thousands of self-reliant and self-governing villages: innumerable circles of village republics. But these village republics were not to be hierarchically organized; instead they would be 'oceanically' organized. In the ocean, all waves maintain similar levels and none dominates over others; similarly, to prevent oppression, no system should be hierarchically organized. In the Gandhian concept of Swaraj, Ram-rajya or the kingdom of God ought to be established first in our own souls, only then can it be established in our villages. Swadeshi—use of home-produced materials in industry and the boycott of foreign goods—was a means to attain Swaraj.

Gandhi did not approve of the opinion that politics is not meant for saints. In fact, it was his contention that good people should join politics and purify it. He did not agree with the view that, in the morally imperfect world of politics, it is impossible to use fair means to attain one's ends. He believed in Gokhale's concept of spiritualization of politics. This was possible, he felt, because the purpose of dharma was to spiritually enrich and ennoble each and every human being.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave further developed the Gandhian insight in politics. In his essay 'Swarajya-

shastra' or 'Science of Politics', he argued that for the establishment of true Swaraj, the elimination of power politics was necessary. He wanted to replace *rājanīti* with *lokanīti*. *Lokanīti* involved a gradual shift of power into the hands of the people, elimination of coercion, and aiming for unanimity in decision-making within communities and assemblies. Following the Gandhian concept of Swaraj, he said that in his ideal state there would be no ruler and no punishment. The people would evolve their own rules to govern their relationships.

Vinoba also wrote a commentary on the Gita and argued that *sāmya-yoga*—cultivation of the spirit of equanimity—was the essence of the Gita's teaching. Contesting Tilak's stand, he said that the Gita did not teach the path of selfless action alone. In India, we have had two paths—the path of Shuka and the path of Janaka. Shuka's path stood for renunciation and Janaka's for the performance of action in the spirit of detachment. It was Vinoba's contention that there was no need to force the issue between the two, as both the paths were equally useful for society. The former was indirectly beneficent to society and the latter directly. Each path had the emancipation of the individual from fear, want, and anxiety as its goal.

In this brief survey of Indian political philosophy—both ancient and modern—we notice that Indian political thinkers realized the importance of freedom of the human will. They did not undertake to restrict human creativity by developing grand theories of historical development. They desired *amṛtatva*, the principle of immortality and freedom of human will; and the capacity to create one's own world was its essence. The state was an instrument to realize this goal, and in the ideal society, this instrument would be rendered functionless. *Anuśāsana* could only be practised keeping in view the principle of *loka saṅgraha*. And equanimity remained the end to be aimed for. If violence, war, and hatred could not be abolished, one could work towards this end by promoting universal friendship and brotherhood. This is the message of Indian political philosophers to the world. 

## ***In Search of an 'Indian' Philosophy of History***

**Prof. Ganapathy Subbiah**

*ślāghyaḥ sa eva guṇavān rāgadveṣabahiṣkṛtā  
bhūtārthakathane yasya stheyasyeva sarasvatī*

The noble-minded (poet) alone is worthy of praise whose word, like that of a judge, remains free from love or hatred in relating the facts of the past.

—*Rajatarangini*, 1.7

THE inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent can feel legitimately proud of being the inheritors or descendents of a long and remarkable culture that is at least five millennia old. Paradoxically, this great heritage often becomes a double-edged sword, serving as both strength and burden to the people of the subcontinent. The strength of this heritage lies in the accumulated and inherited wisdom of the millennia, a wisdom that is always available to us, to guide us through the trials and tribulations of the present, if only we know how to tap it, to listen to its sane voices. Its burden lies in the remnants of the follies and prejudices of the past that we knowingly or unknowingly carry with us, which often obstruct our vision and understanding of the past as well as the present. To clear away these remnants, the people of the subcontinent need to accept and employ the academic discipline called history. This discipline can be a way to acquire dispassionate and objective knowledge of the past and an instrument for gaining a meaningful understanding of the present and a clear vision of the path through the future.

The study as well as the status of history in our country, however, is at crossroads now more than ever before. On the one hand, there is understandable euphoria in many quarters that our country is going through an exciting phase of making history in diverse fields—economic, scientific, and cultural. On the other hand, the discipline of history is itself under fire. Concerted efforts are being made

by some sections of various political groups to gain full control over the curriculum of the discipline in academic institutions, or even to do away with the discipline from the institutions of higher learning altogether, claiming it to be a 'non-utility' subject. In some institutions of higher learning, particularly in South India, history is relegated to the status of only an adjunct subject to more utilitarian courses such as 'tourism and travel management'.

### ***History—A Gift of the West?***

In one sense, this state of affairs should cause no surprise, because it has been time and again argued that 'Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history', and that whatever historical discipline India has developed in the recent past is the gift of the West. We would do well to remember that the notion of history as it has been shaped in the West is rooted in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition in a significant way. And it is equally worth noting that the growth of history as a secular profession and academic discipline in the West was itself a post-Enlightenment phenomenon, which coincided with the emergence of the nations of the Western world as the first global imperial powers. This period witnessed, in the West, the formulation and application of grand theories of history [Universal, Nationalist, Dialectical, Progressive, Marxist, and so on]; some of which were subsequently reformulated, abandoned, or simply replaced by newer ones.

Some of these theories were in due course of time imported into the non-Western world as tools of analysis by local academicians who were trained in the Western system of education. How far such imported theories have helped non-Western societies in obtaining a clearer vision of their past and better understanding of their present is, however, a debatable point. The 'history of history' as it de-

veloped in the Indian subcontinent since the mid-nineteenth century offers an instructive example in this regard. An overwhelming majority of Indian professional historians readily acquiesced in the view of Western scholars that India had in pre-modern times no tradition of historiography in the Western sense of the term. There were, no doubt, sporadic attempts by Indian scholars to repudiate this view, but their voices were too feeble to make any impact. In recent years, we are seeing a renewed and more vigorous effort—coming, surprisingly, from some leading Western scholars specializing in the study of Indian society—to establish that Indians did possess historical consciousness, that a tradition of writing history long existed in India, before the British imported their own brand of 'history'.

We shall not enter into that debate here because its broad contours are familiar to all discerning students of Indian history and culture. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that the terms of discourse on the issue have nearly always been dictated by Western academia. Thus, when Western academicians argued that India in the pre-modern period had no sense of history, Indian scholars, by readily accepting the proposition, lost the battle even before it began. They failed to realize that, *as the terms were understood and employed in the West*, India lacked not only history, but also 'religion' and 'philosophy'. Their uncritical acceptance of the notion that historical consciousness was absent in early India led them to accept a bifurcation of the study of Indian history in the higher academic institutions of our country—a bifurcation into two distinct disciplines, dealing separately with so-called pre-modern and modern Indian history. A new discipline thus came into existence to study various aspects of early Indian culture; it was called *Indology*. Study of early India could not be accommodated within the boundaries of traditional historical discipline. Even today, ancient India receives scant attention in the departments of history in Western universities; because India is supposed to have had no 'history' until the time the European powers arrived on the subcontinent. In contrast, the field of so-called modern

Indian history emerged as a testing ground for most of the grand and novel theories of history—modern and post-modern. Perhaps the most recent and glaring example is the 'subaltern' school of history, authored and nurtured mainly by a team of non-resident Indian historians. The school is no doubt making waves in much of the Western world, but the theoreticians of the school themselves have shown little or no concern for early Indian history.

### **Schools of History**

The study of early Indian history in the first half of the last century was dominated by two schools of historiography: the Imperialist and the Nationalist. Both schools thrived under colonial rule but lost much of their vitality and relevance thereafter. Since Independence two trends have again emerged as dominant in the historiography of early India. One is rooted in what may be called a spirit of 'sub-nationalism', which draws its sustenance from linguistic-cum-ethnic-cum-regional identity, and which emerged as a powerful trend particularly after the reorganization of the states of the Union on the basis of language. The other analyses early and medieval Indian history within a Marxian framework, and in a sense is diametrically opposed to the 'sub-nationalist' school. Historians who owe their allegiance to the Marxian principles of historical materialism do not agree on all points of interpretation of early Indian history; yet, their efforts would appear to converge on taking a long-distance view of Indian history and marking out the stages of 'major advances' therein.

In terms of both quantity and quality, the data relating to early Indian history that have been accumulated and analysed by historians belonging to various schools of thought are, no doubt, impressive. But the crucial question is: has meaningful communication taken place between the historians and the people whose history they have been attempting to reconstruct? The answer has to be a resounding no. The reasons are not far to seek: the academic discourse on history in our country is conducted mainly in English; and more importantly, the epistemological suppositions on which the discourse is based are also

'alien'. Paradoxical though it may sound, some of the most thought-provoking formulations on the relevance of historical consciousness and the meaning and end of history as perceived by the Indian genius have come from great thinkers of modern India who were not professional historians. The foremost among them is Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

### Tagore on Indian History

Rabindranath Tagore was not a historian in any professional or academic sense of the term. He did not speak as a historian, nor did he write as a historian. Our objective therefore is not to assess his craftsmanship as a practising or amateur historian. Tagore was nonetheless constantly making history. It is in his role as a maker of history that he was speaking and writing about the past as well as the present. This point requires reiteration because Tagore has been occasionally criticized by professional historians for the way in which he read and reconstructed the events of the past. At times, he is even held responsible, as their 'spiritual father', for the growth of some of the regressive schools of thought in Indian historiography.

As one constantly engaged in making history, Tagore offers an interesting contrast with another great man and maker of history of his times, Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi denied history the status of being a distinct category or means for acquiring valid knowledge, and went to the extent of declaring, 'I believe in the saying that a nation is happy that has no history. It is my pet theory that our Hindu ancestors solved the question for us by ignoring history as it is understood today.' While Gandhi was pleading to ignore history as it is understood today, his stand was quietly and firmly ignored by his own disciple par excellence, Jawaharlal Nehru. In Nehru's perspective, history is heritage; a study and understanding of it, however difficult and complex it might be, is essential to clear one's mind and prepare it for 'the next stages of thought and action'. He conceded that unlike the Greeks, the Chinese, and the Arabs, 'Indians in the past were not historians', but at the same time, he upheld the view that 'this lack of historical sense

did not affect the masses, for as elsewhere and more so than elsewhere, they built up their view of the past from the traditional account and myth and story that were handed to them from generation to generation.' He nevertheless lamented the ignoring of history by Indians, believing that this ignorance led to a number of negative consequences like 'a vagueness of outlook, a divorce from life as it is, a credulity, a wooliness of the mind where fact was concerned'.

In contrast, reconstruction of the events of the past on the basis of recorded 'facts' did not mean much to Tagore; he saw history as a far deeper and sublimer phenomenon. The following passage from one of his Bengali essays, *Bharatbarshe Itihaser Dhara*, may be said to contain the essence of his conception of what history is and how the early Indians perceived and practised it:

Unopposed shakti (power) is the cause of destruction; all rhythm in the cosmos is the product of two [opposing] forces. ...

This rhythm is not as clearly and freely expressed in human nature (*manab-prakritir madhye*) as it is in the cosmos (*vishwa-prakritir madhye*). The principles of contraction and expansion are there too [in human nature], but we are not able to balance the two easily. In the cosmic song, the rhythm (*tal*) is easy; but in the human song this is a matter of much sadhana. On reaching one end of the duality we often get so carried away that our return to the other end is delayed; then the rhythm is broken. ... The self and the other, acquisition and rejection, restraint and freedom, tradition and reason—these [dualities] are pulling [all] humans; to learn to maintain the rhythm of the opposing pulls and reach harmony (*sama*) is to learn to be human; the history of this practice of maintaining rhythm is the history of humanity. In India we have the opportunity of clearly observing the record of this sadhana of *tal*.

Tagore speaks here of two distinct spheres, the physical world and the world of humans, and draws our attention to the crucial factor that unites as well as differentiates the two, as also the manner in which they complement each other. Whereas the rhyme and rhythm of the physical world is clear and obstacle-free, that of the human world is not,

**Historical Evolution of India** · Non-existence can never be the cause of what exists. Something cannot come out of nothing. That the law of causation is omnipotent and knows no time or place when it did not exist is a doctrine as old as the Āryan race, sung by its ancient poet-seers, formulated by its philosophers, and made the corner-stone upon which the Hindu man even of today builds his whole scheme of life.

There was an inquisitiveness in the race to start with, which very soon developed into bold analysis, and though, in the first attempt, the work turned out might be like the attempts with shaky hands of the future master-sculptor, it very soon gave way to strict science, bold attempts, and startling results.

Its boldness made these men search every brick of their sacrificial altars; scan, cement, and pulverise every word of their scriptures; arrange, re-arrange, doubt, deny, or explain the ceremonies. ... It evolved the science of geometry from the arrangements of bricks to build various altars, and startled the world with astronomical knowledge that arose from the attempts accurately to time their worship and oblations. It made their contribu-

tion to the science of mathematics the largest of any race, ancient or modern, and to their knowledge of chemistry, of metallic compounds in medicine, their scale of musical notes, their invention of the bow-instruments—(all) of great service in the building of modern European civilisation. It led them to invent the science of building up the child-mind through shining fables, of which every child in every civilised country learns in a nursery or a school and carries an impress through life.

Behind and before this analytical keenness, covering it as in a velvet sheath, was the other great mental peculiarity of the race—poetic insight. Its religion, its philosophy, its history, its ethics, its politics were all inlaid in a flower-bed of poetic imagery—the miracle of language which was called Sanskrit or ‘perfected’, lending itself to expressing and manipulating them better than any other tongue. The aid of melodious numbers was invoked even to express the hard facts of mathematics.


This analytical power and the boldness of poetical visions which urged it onward are the two great internal causes in the make-up of the Hindu race.

—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 6.157–8

because attaining equilibrium in the human world is neither easy nor automatic. It can be realized only through long and arduous effort (*sadhana*).

Tagore also refers to a dialectical process involving opposites; this process is in constant operation between not only the physical and the human worlds but also within each human being, and inevitably leads to change (*parinama*). If and when perfect balance is achieved as these opposites interact with each other, rhyme and rhythm or, in Tagore’s language, the *chhanda*, is realized. This is the meaning as well as the end of history. In Tagore’s understanding of history, there is no external force or power that can intervene and help us realize this; we have to realize it ourselves through constant endeavour. The story of this endeavour is what constitutes the sum and substance of human history.

Where do the generative roots of this notion of history that Tagore has formulated lie? Is it possible to trace their origin to some of the foundational thoughts of early Indian philosophy? There are

no simple or ready answers. But one cannot resist the temptation to draw a parallel between Tagore’s strikingly material conception of history and the Sankhya philosophy, in which all change is perceived as the result of an unending dialectical process between the active but unintelligent Prakriti (physical world) and the non-active but intelligent Purusha (human world). Are we treading the right path or misreading Tagore completely? 

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## ***Social Seismography in Indian Legal Philosophy***

**Dr N L Mitra**

### ***Two Trends in Modern Legal Philosophy***

**S***ANS* society, human beings would require no legal regime other than the survival-of-the-fittest law of nature. If social human beings are the best creatures on this globe, their mental and physical evolution has perhaps made their present phase of life the most complex in the living world: this is indeed an incredibly interesting and intricate stage in the journey of our growing human family. This stage is intricate particularly because the rapid development of physical resources and means of material pleasure creates pressure on the facultative mental growth of modern human beings. Law is an instrument institutionalizing the social and functional framework required in the development and growth of the material world; at the same time, it is based on the commonality of purpose that enriches the mental and cultural fabric of human history. In the material world, law attempts to lay down the *global principles for maximizing pleasure*, and in the psychological, sociological, and cultural spheres law makes a silent plea for *universal humanism*. These two tendencies may neither be parallel tracks, nor necessarily be inversely related. But maximizing the possibility of their coexistence is perhaps a notion worthy of enquiry.

These considerations have now brought the instrument of law face to face with its creator, the state. At one time in human history, law as a social instrument was used to legalize the actions of the ruling power in a state; now law talks more about 'maximizing the satisfaction of the maximum number of people of the globe' and universalizing the 'growing index of human rights'. This is an argument for a 'minimal state'. The two movements for the global integration of economy and

acceptance of the universal basis of human values both argue for minimizing the role of the nation state. But the seismic social tensions associated with both these movements have been mitigated with political palliatives in the form of 'national interest' (articulated in the context of global integration of economies) and 'multiplicity of culture' (in the universal human rights philosophy).<sup>1</sup> Post-9/11, the state is both stronger as well as more fragile; stronger to effectively deal with terrorism through whatever means it deems fit, but more fragile under international pressure. Terrorism puts world politics in a pressure cooker that is at risk of exploding anywhere, at any time, and in any form! After all, who defines what terrorism is? This brings us to the dialectics of modern legal principles and jural correlation.

A modern multicultural society cannot remain within the framework of reason of any historical structure governing monocultural societies of yesteryears—like the Roman, Germanic, Anglo-Saxon, or ecclesiastical social structures. Contemporary legal systems are largely built on the mosaic of multicultural social structures. Therefore, it is not surprising that polemics of ideological and material dialectics are common in the hybrid legal structures of our time. Modern philosophy is perhaps based more on applications than on pure forms of rationality. If that is so, it is not *law* that is so important as an instrument; it is *justice* that is more significant. In fact, realist philosophers, unlike the positivists, have highlighted the importance of interpretation over the actual body of law. Let us examine the dynamics of the Indian legal system first and then come back to this argument.

**Factors Affecting Legal Philosophy**

Among the major legal systems of the world, popular ones are the ecclesiastical law, Romano-Germanic civil law, Anglo-Saxon common law, and constitutional legal systems. There are, however, a very wide range of ethnic legal cultures around the world. Since the legal systems of nation states are not airtight compartments, hybrid cultures have come into being ever since communities started intermixing through invasion, trade, and colonization. The last three hundred years saw a rapid growth of hybrid systems rising out of imperialism, industrialization, and international trade. The tension between the two aforementioned processes in legal culture intensified. On the one hand, the alien legal culture of imperial powers was forcibly imposed on foreign territories, and on the other hand, the rational structure of existing indigenous systems became gradually weak and questionable. As a matter of fact, the constitutional legal systems were born out of the conflict between the civil and common law cultures in the US and the higher demand for democracy. The First Republic of France provided the philosophy of social contract and the American federation the grand design of constitutionality.

If colonization, imperialism, and industrialization set the pace for global cross-fertilization of cultures through law and its practices in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, world trade and technology propelled by global communication take the lead for global integration in the twenty-first century. The phenomenal flow of information places political powers under compulsion to respect the rational arguments of science and technology and the end point of economic advantage and growth that they project. Economics deals with functional efficiency, and politics with balance of power; law is the instrument of interaction between economics and politics. Depending upon the dominant historical factors in a given political economy, law is defined as the 'command of the sovereign' in colonial and imperial history, as the instrument for 'maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain (the sum

of material enjoyment)' in utilitarian industrial civilization, and as a process for attaining efficiency by deriving 'comparative advantage' in the global market economy. Law calibrates the social structure at different times of human history differently, and often operates as a top-down prescriptive system. Law can thus operate in the long run as 'an instrument for social engineering'.

Examples may make the proposition clear. Law in British India, defined according to the contemporary positivism of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence as 'command of the sovereign', acknowledged the power of the British monarch to prescribe laws for India and Indians. This could not be questioned. That is the reason why the British could bring in the order for the 'permanent settlement' of land holdings in Bengal. This step entirely reshaped the ancient Indian social structure into a feudal system. Similarly, if the instrument of 'legal entity with limited liability' had not been designed and invented, industrialization would have been impossible. With one ingenious stroke of law, a feudal business structure was transformed into a capitalist framework. One can go on narrating such instances of legal philosophy directing social restructuring at different times in history.

There are several factors affecting the legal philosophy of any country, especially a country like India where the rule of law has many infirmities.<sup>2</sup> These factors are both external and internal. External factors include nomadic invasion and settlement, barter, colonization, imperialism, industrialization, modernization, technological invention and innovation, global communication, and so on; and internal, the changes in the rationalization process within the legal system.

The integration of national economies with the global market is what is commonly termed 'globalization'. This has involved various multilateral, bilateral, and regional agreements between nation states involving such platforms as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), and the UN

Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The other important external factor that has significantly influenced the contemporary legal system is the universal movement to strengthen human rights and humane conditions of living, including protection of the global environment, through such global agencies as the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Committee, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Changes in the top-down model of law that has been operational in India for over two centuries have now been undertaken—some for legal capacity-building, some for increasing the efficiency of political governance as a whole and of the judicial process in particular, and yet others for strengthening the philosophical basis of governance.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Impact of Integration of Global Economy***

I would like to identify three strong movements towards globalization that have historically influenced national legal phenomena: the earliest involved general trade negotiations, followed by colonization, and finally industrialization. But the real challenge for national legal systems came in the post-war period, when the seed of seamless international trade was sown in the proposed International Trade Organization (ITO). To prepare the way for ITO, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was started in 1947 as an ongoing series of deliberations and negotiations to liberalize world trade. The fundamental basis of these negotiations was the assumption that free trade was the main ground for overall development of the economies of nation states, even though the ground reality was such that, without trade barriers, the undeveloped and developing nation states could not possibly develop industrially. GATT negotiations took forty-eight years to finally come to an agreement on a structured legal system of world trade. This body is the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is in itself a very significant milestone in the progress of the legal arrangement

for integration of the global economy.

Let me explain this development. The United Nations is based on the philosophy that (i) the sovereignty of each member state has to be respected, (ii) subjection to international law is by integration of national law with international law by each member state, (iii) application of international law through the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is absolutely voluntary—the ICJ has no territorial jurisdiction—and (iv) enforcement of the decisions of the ICJ is completely in the hands of the nation states on a voluntary basis. This being the case, the legality of international law was always questioned. International law does not attract obedience, because such law does not emanate from any sovereign force and there is no enforcement mechanism—no compulsory mandate for sanctions for non-implementation of the decisions of the ICJ—behind it. Thus, to a group of positive analytical jurists, international law is an oxymoron. It may at best be the ‘positive morality’ of member states, but is in no sense a positive legal system.<sup>4</sup>

In the WTO we have, for the first time, a dispute-resolution body with a definite jurisdiction; the decisions of this body are binding on the state, and there is provision for sanctions in case of non-compliance. This is a complete departure from the traditional understanding of international law. This agreement, developed over a period of nearly fifty years through several thousand legal principles of global jurisprudence and analysed and printed on more than 50,000 pages with eight major agreements, has seriously influenced all transactional, fiscal, revenue, and business laws of the member states including laws on intellectual property, the property of the twenty-first century. No war could have brought about this ‘imposed unification’ of the legal culture of so many nation states at one go.

### ***Impact of Universal Movements***

One of the positive impacts of the UN in the post-war history of the world is the development of human rights jurisprudence and the growing participation of non-governmental organizations in the

area of enforcement of human rights. In India this movement was intensified on account of the proactive role played by the judiciary. Through a series of judicial pronouncements, the judiciary has not only corrected executive and legislative excesses but has also increased the role of international human rights laws in securing the rights of individuals. India has witnessed both horizontal and vertical growth of human rights jurisprudence.

The first pronouncements in this regard were on the question of applicability of international law to the national situation. As a dualist country, India has a strong common law argument that unless the national law is changed in line with international law or treaties, the latter are not binding upon dealings between the state and the people of the country. The first judicial interpretative change in this line of thought was introduced by the Supreme Court of India through its opinion that while interpreting national law the court shall take the help of international laws.<sup>5</sup> This was further amended in a decision holding that international law is binding unless the national law contains a contradictory legal proposition.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the court stipulated that international law is binding unless there is a specific contradictory law on the issue.<sup>7</sup> Respect for international law has increased on account of these interpretations of the Supreme Court. Of course, the Indian constitution promises to respect international laws and treaties.<sup>8</sup> *(To be continued)*

## Notes and References

1. Articles 3, 20, 21 of GATT 1994 deal with national treatment, and general and security exceptions; Article 3, 12, and 14 of the Agreement on TRIPS with similar issues. Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights deals with the nation state's special powers during national emergency; Article 18 stipulates freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Universal cultural rights are discussed in Article 15 of the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.
2. The infirmities are manifold: too few judges, too many cases, lack of proper and sufficient training for judges, inordinate delays in judgement, poor infrastructure of and inadequate investment in the justice delivery system, and so on.

**We often talk** of right and justice, but we find that in the world right and justice are mere baby's talk. There are two things which guide the conduct of men: might and mercy. The exercise of might is invariably the exercise of selfishness. All men and women try to make the most of whatever power or advantage they have. Mercy is heaven itself; to be good, we have all to be merciful. Even justice and right should stand on mercy.

—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 1.59

3. In the mid nineties the World Bank was eager to invest in projects of legal capacity building. I had occasion to be associated—sometimes independently, and at other times as member of the research team of the Harvard Institute of International Development—in several such projects on legal capacity building in banking law, the corporate legal system, bankruptcy law, financial credit, docket management in the court system, training of judges, and so on, funded by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, UNDP, and UNEP.
4. Laws may be classified as follows: (A) Laws properly so called and (B) Laws improperly so called. Laws properly so called are (i) Laws properly and strictly so called and (ii) Laws properly so called. Laws properly so called comprise (a) Laws of God and (b) Human laws. Human laws made by a political superior are laws properly and strictly so called. Human laws not made by a political superior like contract law, club law, etc. are simply positive morality. Laws improperly so called may be laws by analogy and laws by metaphor. International law is simply law by analogy because it is a contract between nation states. It can at best be positive morality of the member nations.
5. *Moti Lal v. State of UP*, AIR [All India Reporter] 1951 All 257, *Re Berubari*, AIR 1960 SC 845.
6. *Maganbhai v. Union*, AIR 1969 SC 783, *Varghese v. Bank of Cochin*, AIR 1980 SC 470.
7. *Civil Right Committee v. Union*, AIR 1983 Kant 85, *Gramophone Co. v. Birendra*, AIR 1984 SC 667, *Vishakha v. State of Rajasthan*, AIR 1997 SC 3011.
8. Article 51 (c) of Chapter IV of the Constitution stipulates that the state shall endeavour to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized people with one another.



Sir Charles Wilkins

## Sir Charles Wilkins's Fundamental Contribution to Indology in the West

Swami Tathagatananda

THE European Renaissance began with the migration of Greek scholars to Europe from Turkey in 1453. Similarly, an Oriental renaissance has been taking place over the last two and a half centuries, with the studies in Sanskrit, Pali, and Prakrit by Western scholars. The presence of nearly two hundred research scholars and Sanskritists in India during the 18th and 19th centuries, devoted to classical studies, facilitated the dissemination of India's sacred and secular culture to the West.

It was only when the English started establishing themselves as administrators in the land of Bharat that the widespread dissemination of India's philosophy in England and other European nations began. An essay on India's history and culture, written by Alexander Dow in 1768, indicated that the abundant but as yet unrevealed Sanskrit works were worthy of England's notice and study. The publication of Dow's essay was followed by two significant events: the founding of the Asiatic Society, and the publication of the first English translations of the Bhagavadgita and the *Hitopadesha*. Sir William Jones (1746–94), the first great Indologist and 'father of Asian Studies', founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. This was an epoch-making event in the meeting of East and West on both intellectual and spiritual levels. Jones worked hard to disseminate India's spiritual treasures to the West through his books and the publication of the society's journal *Asiatic Researches*.

We are concerned here with the second significant event—the first English translation of the Gita—and with the other contributions of Sir Charles Wilkins. His Gita and *Hitopadesha* transla-

tions appeared in 1784 and 1787, and his authoritative Sanskrit grammars in 1808 and 1815, thus laying the foundations for all later Indological work.

Sir Charles Wilkins (1750–1836) was born into a poor family, a stroke of fate that deprived him of a higher education. Still, he was ambitious and enterprising. In 1770, at the age of twenty, he went to India by getting a writership through the Junior Civil Service of the East India Company. He also served as an assistant to the chief of the company's factory in Malda. He was introduced to Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751–1830); this acquaintance piqued his interest in and determination to study Sanskrit. Halhed, who knew Bengali, had prepared a rudimentary grammar of that language for the use of the staff of the East India Company in 1778. Prior to this, William Bolts, a German civil servant in Europe, had attempted to cast Bengali type, but failed.<sup>1</sup> Only three other books had been printed in Bengali before 1778, all in Lisbon and all in Roman type (*ibid.*). Wilkins wanted to publish Halhed's grammar and, with the skilful mould-casting assistance of Panchanan Karmakar, was able to print and publish *Grammar of the Bengali Language* in the same year that Halhed had prepared it. In this way, the East India Company printed its first Bengali grammar from the printing press of Master Andrews in Hooghly.<sup>2</sup>

All this was possible because Wilkins had acquired some type-casting experience in England. He was the first to utilize the methods of engraving, casting, and setting to print in the Bengali script.<sup>3</sup> Warren Hastings (1733–1818), the first governor general of India, was a great patron of Sanskrit studies and heartily encouraged Wilkins to create

the Bengali type and to study Sanskrit.<sup>4</sup>

Halhed wrote in the preface of his Bengali grammar about Wilkins's feat:

In a country so remote from all connections with European artists, he has been obliged to charge himself with all the various occupations of the metallurgist, the engraver, the foundry man and the printer. To the merit of invention he was compelled to add application of personal labour. With a rapidity unknown in Europe, he surmounted all the obstacles which necessarily clog the first rudiments of a difficult art as well as disadvantages of solitary experiment.<sup>5</sup>

Referring to William Caxton (c.1422–91), who earned immortality for pioneering English typesetting, Louis Mathieu Langlès conferred upon Wilkins the epithet 'Caxton of Bengali types' (ibid.). Wilkins also later manufactured Persian types. His success led the East India Company to place him in charge of their press, from which government documents in Persian and Bengali were also printed (34).

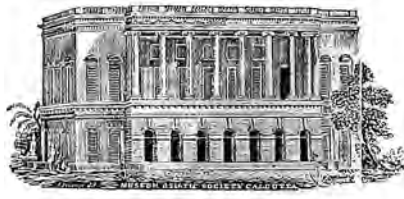
Taking Halhed's Bengali grammar as a challenge, Wilkins printed his own Bengali grammar in 1778—but he went directly to the Sanskrit language to achieve it.<sup>6</sup> He thus revealed the structure of languages derived from Sanskrit and altered the course of linguistic history. This is especially remarkable in light of his humble beginnings. He was the first employee of the East India Company to learn Sanskrit,<sup>7</sup> and initiated the new discipline of Sanskrit scholarship. It was Hastings who requested him to study with Indian pandits at Benares (Varanasi), the traditional seat of Sanskrit learning. Hastings, whose love for learning allowed him to address Wilkins (officially his subordinate) as 'friend',<sup>8</sup> had also been able to overcome the reluctance of the hereditary priests of India to allow their scriptures to be read by *mlecchas* (foreigners). He had prepared the *Vibadarnaba Setu* with the help of the pandits and published it in London in 1776 under the title *A Code of Gentoo Laws, or Ordinations of the Pandits*.<sup>9</sup> Langlès adds further details in the preface to *Recherches Asiaticques*:

It was in response to a direct summons from Hastings that the Brahmans versed in the Shastras ... came to Calcutta from all parts of India. Gathering at Fort William and supplied with the most authentic texts, they drafted a comprehensive treatise on Indic law in the Hindu language. This was subsequently translated into Persian, and into English by Halhed under the title Code of Gentoo Laws. It was also under Hastings' auspices that Charles Wilkins studied Sanskrit and had the distinction of publishing the first translation in a European language based directly on a Sanskrit text.<sup>10</sup>

In 1783, Sir William Jones arrived in Calcutta and immediately devoted himself to Sanskrit and the translation of ancient Sanskrit texts. Initially, he had to overcome resistance from the brahmanas he approached to teach him. In his book *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions*, Arthur Versluis confirms that Jones had tried 'to gain access to Hindu sacred books and Sanskrit, but could find no Brahmin willing to teach this unbelieving foreigner, and only with great effort was he able to find a Hindu physician who taught him enough Sanskrit sufficient to translate the Laws of Manu and the Hitopadesa, both of which were later influential on the Transcendentalists'.<sup>11</sup>

This Hindu physician was Ram Lochan Kavibhushana, who was a Vaidya by caste. Jones gave profound attention to his studies of India with a nobler purpose than that of his wealth-seeking contemporaries. He mastered Sanskrit during the last ten years of his life thanks to Wilkins, whose knowledge of Sanskrit had made a deep impression on his mind. Encouraged by Hastings and helped by Wilkins, Jones founded the Asiatic Society in Calcutta on 15 January 1784. Though he did not enjoy a good reputation in official circles within Great Britain, Hastings rendered signal service in the spread of India's valuable cultural insights as recorded in her Sanskrit scriptures. He was well-educated and was the first to be approached for the position of president of the Asiatic Society. When he declined, Jones became president.

In 1781, Wilkins deciphered the Sanskrit inscription on a copper plate found in Bihar that be-



*The Asiatic Society,  
Calcutta, 1808*

longed to the tenth-century king Vigrahapala Deva of Bengal. This, along with other Sanskrit stone inscriptions he deciphered, was published by the Asiatic Society in its official organ, *Asiatic Researches*, in 1788 and 1790.<sup>12</sup> Wilkins's pioneering work in this area enabled historians to reconstruct the ancient Pala period of the history of Bengal. In 1794, Jones completed the translation of the *Manusamhita* that Wilkins had started. He had read the entire original work three times. It was published with the title *Institutes of Hindu Law, or, the Ordinances of Manu, According to the Gloss of Culluca*.

Wilkins played a leading role in the formation of London's Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, which was founded by Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765–1837). The contributions of William Jones, Charles Wilkins, and Colebrooke to the researches of the Asiatic Society are memorable, and display a broad range of study. They strove, through their studies, to satisfy their desire to understand India through Sanskrit and all things Indian. Their remarkable works, together with Anquetil-Duperron's *Oupnek'hat*, proved to be the greatest inspiration for Emerson, Thoreau, and other writers of the American Transcendentalist movement.

It may be noted that Colebrooke was also employed by the East India Company in 1783 as secretary of the Indian Civil Service and later, in 1801, as a professor of Sanskrit and Hindu law at the College of Fort William. He became president of the Calcutta Court in 1805 before joining the Council of India in 1807. He returned to Europe in 1815 and donated his valuable collection of oriental manuscripts to the library of the East India Company. His most important work as an Indologist, *Essays on the Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus*, is still relevant and admired today.

### **Wilkins's Love for the Gita**

Wilkins loved the Bhagavadgita wholeheartedly. He

compared it to the Gospel of John of the New Testament. In 1785 his *Bhagavat-Geeta*, the very first translation of the Gita into a European language, was printed in London at the direction of the East India Company upon the special recommendation of Warren Hastings. Hastings had a fascination for the Gita and pursued the Court of Directors of the East India Company until the directors agreed to publish the work at the company's expense (33). The researches of Gauranga Gopal Sengupta (b. 1913), a scholar and member of the Asiatic Society, confirms Hastings's great esteem for the Gita. Sengupta writes:

Warren Hastings, while forwarding a copy of the Bhagavad Gita [by Wilkins] to the chairman of the East India Company, in course of an introduction, stated that the work was 'a performance of great originality, of a sublimity of conception, reasoning, and diction almost unequalled, and a single exception among all the known religions of mankind of a theology accurately corresponding with that of the Christian dispensation, and most powerfully illustrating its fundamental doctrines.'<sup>13</sup>

Well aware of the Gita's universal bearing, Hastings included a prophetic expression in this introduction, which was later added to the book:

Every instance which brings their [the Indians'] real character home to observation will impress us with a more generous sense of feeling for their natural rights, and teach us to estimate them by the measure of our own. But such instances can only be obtained in their writings: and these will survive when the British dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist, and when the sources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance.'<sup>14</sup>

He also praised the work's literary merits and asserted that the study and true practice of the Gita's teachings would lead humanity to peace and bliss.<sup>15</sup>

Ralph Waldo Emerson beautifully expressed his reasons for studying English works on Orientalism and wrote of their value to all thoughtful Englishmen:

By the law of contraries, I look for an irresistible taste for Orientalism in Britain. For a self-

conceited modish life, made up of trifles, clinging to a corporeal civilization, hating ideas, there is no remedy like the Oriental largeness. That astonishes and disconcerts English decorum. For once there is thunder it never heard, light it never saw, and power which trifles with time and space. I am not surprised, then, to find an Englishman like Warren Hastings, who had been struck with the grand style of thinking in the Indian writings, deprecating the prejudices of his countrymen, while offering them a translation of the Bhagavat [Gita].<sup>16</sup>

### The Impact of Wilkins's Bhagavat-Geeta

The publication of Charles Wilkins's Gita (*Bhagavat-Geetâ, or Dialogues of Kreesna and Arjoon*) under the auspices of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in November 1784 and later in London in 1785,<sup>17</sup> had a great impact on Europe. Raymond Schwab, in his study of the rediscovery of India and the East in Europe, wrote in *The Oriental Renaissance* that 'no text could, by its profound metaphysics and by the prestige of its poetic casting, more irresistibly shake the hold of the tradition of a superior race' (161). In 1795, Louis Matthieu Langlès, curator of oriental manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, and its provisional specialist on India, mentioned Wilkins in an article on the literary works of the English in India:

A single man is carrying out an undertaking that usually requires the collaboration of a large number of artists. His first attempts are typographical masterpieces. This truly amazing man, whose name merits a distinguished place in the list of benefactors of letters, is Charles Wilkins, a scholar deeply versed in Sanskrit and known in Europe for two works [Bhagavadgita and *Hitopadesha*] he has translated from the sacred language of the Brahmins.<sup>18</sup>

A short span of ten years had passed from the publication of Wilkins's *Bhagavat-Geeta* to the appearance of Langlès's article in the *Magasin Encyclopédique*. The brilliant translations of Sanskrit books from the Asiatic Society were now well known in revolutionary France, despite the decrease in communications owing to the events of

**As often as there is a decline of virtue**, and an insurrection of vice and injustice, in the world, I make myself evident; and thus I appear, from age to age, for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of virtue.

He, O *Arjoon*, who from conviction, acknowledgeth my divine birth and actions to be even so, doth not, upon his quitting his mortal frame, enter into another, for he entereth into me.

Many who were free from affection, fear, and anger, and, filled with my spirit, depended upon me, having been purified by the power of wisdom, have entered into me. —*Gita*, 4.7–10, trans. Charles Wilkins

the French Revolution. Langlès continued to document Indic research and was well aware of the importance of the Society, which was dedicated to Oriental research and scholarship. He included a history and bibliography of the early publications of the Society in the third volume of the *Magasin Encyclopédique*.<sup>19</sup>

In 1787, Abbé Parraud retranslated Wilkins's Gita into French. A second French translation, made directly from Sanskrit by Jean-Denis Lanjuinais, was published posthumously in 1832. Lanjuinais had written of the 'great surprise' it was 'to find among these fragments of an extremely ancient epic poem from India ... a completely spiritual pantheism ... and ... the vision of all-in-God.'<sup>20</sup>

### Emerson Receives the Gift of the Gita

According to Swami Vivekananda, Emerson's greatest source of inspiration was 'this book, the [Bhagavad] Gita. He went to see Carlyle, and Carlyle made him a present of the Gita; and that little book is responsible for the Concord [Transcendentalist] Movement. All the broad movements in America, in one way or other, are indebted to the Concord party.'<sup>21</sup> The book was Wilkins's Gita.<sup>22</sup> Carlyle gave no other book to Emerson during their first visit together, and told him, 'This is a most inspiring book; it has brought comfort and consolation in my life—I hope it will do the same to you. Read it.'<sup>23</sup> This Gita is preserved in the Emerson archives


in Boston. Through Carlyle's love for it, Emerson came to cherish the Gita.

Illness forced Wilkins to return to England in 1786, after sixteen years in India. He later fitted a printing press in Bath, England, with Devanagari type. From this press, Wilkins's *Hitopadesha* (1787) and *Story of Shakuntala from the Mahabharata* (1793) were printed. Wilkins went on to become the librarian of the East India Company's London library in 1799. As a leading Indologist in charge of the famous India Office Library, Wilkins collected a large number of manuscripts from India; these formed its core collection. His *Grammar of the Sanskrit Language* was printed from London (after a fire consumed his press) in 1808. In 1815, he also published *Radicals of the Sanskrit Language*, on verb roots, in London. Both grammars were welcomed by students of Sanskrit. It is interesting to note here that the first Sanskrit curriculum in England was probably introduced in 1805 by the East India Company at Haileybury College—Charles Wilkins had been appointed 'examiner and visitor' there<sup>24</sup>—but Sanskrit was taught only to train English civil servants.

The Société Asiatique de Paris was founded in 1821, two years before the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland was created in London. On 1 April 1822, Silvestre de Sacy (1755–1838), who had founded the first European chair of Sanskrit in 1815 at the Collège de France in Paris, chaired the first general meeting. Paris became the first European city to officially provide teaching of the Sanskrit language and thus to follow the example laid down by the Asiatic Society in Calcutta. Some of the associates of the Société included Charles Wilkins, Horace Wilson, and Colebrooke from England; and Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, Franz Bopp (who founded the study of comparative philology in 1816), and Friedrich and August von Schlegel (eminent pioneers in Indian studies) from Germany.

The essence of Hindu thought, as elegantly and concisely put forth in the Gita, was disseminated throughout Europe thanks to Wilkins's transla-

tion. His Gita was later translated into all major languages and reached a universal audience. Several scholarly organizations conferred honours upon him: in 1788 the Royal Asiatic Society of London elected him to membership, in 1805 he received a doctorate in Civil Law from Oxford, and in 1833 King George IV knighted him.

Dedicated scholars such as Sir Charles Wilkins share boundless enthusiasm for the comprehensive, subtle, and brilliant Hindu mind. They belong to a unique group of Western seekers, indomitable, persevering, and devoted to understanding the quest of India's saints and sages. 

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# Raja Rammohan Roy: His Political Views

Dr Bimal Kumar Roy

**R**AJA Rammohan Roy is known as the pole star of Indian awakening, 'the Prometheus of 19th century India', and 'the inaugurator of the New Age'. He was regarded by Mahatma Gandhi as one of the greatest reformers of his time and the father of advanced liberal thought in Hinduism. His idealism showed a new light to generations of Indians.

Rammohan's views on Indian political thought are strikingly original and seminal, putting him on a par with such Western political thinkers as Aristotle. Just as there is a tendency in the West to refer to Aristotle's thoughts as a benchmark, reappraisals of the Raja's political thought and his pioneering efforts in such diverse fields as social modernization and religious reform have served as important landmarks in Indian historiography. Rammohan has been seen as the 'father of modern India' who 'laid the foundation of a grand national edifice, broad issued on freedom and equality'. The great Indian thinker and patriot Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das observed about Rammohan: 'The life work of this great man has got to be re-estimated, revalued, re-understood, and reinterpreted. ... He was the first to sound the note of freedom in every department of life and in every different culture that has met to-day in India. ... He inaugurated many reforms ... which again, in turn, gave rise to reaction which, again, gave rise to further reforms which made the nation turn on itself, till at last, it began to be self-conscious.'<sup>1</sup>

To the reviewer of Rammohan's works it may well appear that though he died in 1833, his versatile soul remains still alive. He is best remembered as a religious and social reformer. To many, he is also familiar as a *littérateur* and educationist. But



Raja  
Rammohan Roy

he is not so well-known as a political reformer and agitator.<sup>2</sup> We shall briefly discuss his enlightened political views and activities as well as his socio-religious opinions.<sup>3</sup>

## Love of Freedom

Born at Radhanagar on 22 May 1772, Rammohan entered the service of the East India Company as a revenue officer and saw the company develop into a paramount power. The people of Bengal had enjoyed only a limited measure of civil liberty under the company for nearly half a century (1772–1821). In 1821, Rammohan took the initiative to start a Bengali newspaper, *Sambad Kaumudi*, to rouse the political consciousness of the people of Bengal.<sup>4</sup>

Rammohan had not the slightest doubt in his mind that the change that he wanted to bring about in the religious and social systems of his country would exert beneficial influence on the political advancement of India. Love of freedom of action and freedom from all shackles that blind the mind were his strongest passions. The Raja also believed that the 'enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be ultimately successful'.<sup>5</sup>

A perceptive critic of British rule, Rammohan carefully watched the workings of the administrative machinery. He raised his voice of protest whenever its operations jarred on his sense of fairness and justice. The government of his day was a 'benevolent despotism'. Rammohan wanted that it should retain its trait of benevolence but outgrow its irresponsible character. He further desired that there should be close cooperation between the rulers and the ruled for this purpose.

Rammohan's insistence on personal freedom

and his zealous safeguard against encroachment upon his mental freedom were accompanied by an equal sensitivity to the rights of others. It has been said that as Rammohan had an unbounded faith in the sense of justice and goodness of the British government, his love for freedom was abstract and had very little relevance to the future national struggle for freedom. But his persistent efforts to mobilize Indian and British opinion against all misuse of authority, his vision of India as a unitary entity, his endeavours for its political advancement by petitioning the highest authorities of the Empire, and his remarkable international vision had considerable contemporary significance.

As Rammohan was the first all-round reformer in modern India, his views about the political status of the Hindus are significant. Rammohan felt that the Hindus lost their political freedom because of inner decadence. In 1828 he wrote:

I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interests. The distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions and subdivisions among them, has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise. ... It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort (75).

Rammohan, therefore, fully recognized the interrelation between religious reformation and political and civil progress.

Willing to reform the Hindu religious mind, Rammohan opposed 'the worship of idols, very often under the most shameful forms, accompanied with the foulest language, the most indecent hymns and gestures'. This remark has been construed by some as Rammohan's contempt for Hindus, but what he probably meant was that it was spiritual and religious decadence and weakness which was responsible for India's falling prey to foreign conquest. The main object of his reform activities seems to have been aimed at breaking the chains of ortho-

doxy and lethargy which bound his countrymen, so that they could regain their political status.

### Power of the Pen

A pioneer of liberalism, Rammohan founded two weeklies, *Sambad Kaumudi* (Moonlight of News) in Bengali and *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* (Mirror of News) in Persian, to promote Indian journalism as well as to express his thoughts against the injustices and irregularities committed by the British.<sup>6</sup>

In the first number of the *Sambad Kaumudi*, Rammohan had written an article in praise of trial by jury and in defence of freedom of the press. He was opposed to the discrimination against Indians envisaged in the Indian Jury Bill of 1826 whereby they were allowed to sit on petty juries only, not on grand juries, and not at the trials of Christians. He carried on ceaseless propaganda against this bill and sponsored a petition to the British Parliament signed by both Hindus and Muslims, which he forwarded with a covering note written by himself. The petition was presented to the Parliament on 5 June 1829, and on 18 June 1832 the Grant's East India Justice and Jury Bill was passed repealing the discriminatory clause in the 1826 bill. *Samachar Darpan*, the Serampore paper of the Baptist missionaries, congratulated Rammohan on the passing of this act.

In March 1823, John Adam, the acting governor general, promulgated the press regulation ordinance which made it illegal to publish newspapers or periodicals without having a license from the Governor General in Council, endorsed by the Chief Secretary. Rammohan decided to stop the publication of *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* in protest against the imposition of this ordinance and wrote a brilliant defence of freedom of the press in India. 'A free press,' according to the Raja, 'is one of the best safeguards of liberty.' His defence of a free press found expression in his petition against the press regulation to the Supreme Court and to the King in Council. The memorial to the Supreme Court has been described as the '*Areopagitica* of Indian History.' Alike in diction and in argument, it forms a noble landmark in the progress of English culture in the East.

The memorial submitted to the Supreme Court bore no fruit. Rammohan and his coadjutors appealed to the King in Council. Miss Sophia Collet had this to say about the appeal: 'The appeal is one of the noblest pieces of English to which Rammohan put his hand. Its stately periods and not less stately thought, recall the eloquence of the great creators of a century ago. In language and style for ever associated with the glorious vindication of liberty, it invokes against the arbitrary exercise of British power, the principles and traditions which are distinctive of British History.'<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately the appeal was rejected by the Privy Council after six months' consideration.

Rammohan's protests against the dictatorial rule of the British did not stop here. He strongly set his face against all brands of infallibility—spiritual, scholastic, or bureaucratic. He held that every good ruler must be conscious of the great liability to err in managing the affairs of a vast empire, and should therefore be anxious to afford every individual the realistic means of bringing to his notice the issues that may require his intervention. This object can be secured only by the unrestrained liberty of publication.

Rammohan visited England as an ambassador of the then Mughal king Akbar II of Delhi and vigorously pleaded the king's case for an increase in his allowance before the British Crown.<sup>8</sup> In England he countered the petition by orthodox Hindu leaders for repeal of the anti-sati decree (which abolished the practice of sati) before the House of Commons.

A select committee had been appointed by the House of Commons in June 1831 to consider the renewal of the Charter of the East India Company. Rammohan tendered evidence in the form of successive communications to the Board of Control, which he got published as a separate volume entitled *Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue Systems in India, and of the General Character and Condition of Its Native Inhabitants*.<sup>9</sup> During a debate before the select committee, Rammohan suggested the appointment of Indians as

Judicial Assessors and Joint Judges. He also suggested such improvements as regular public registrars, codes of civil and criminal law, separation of the executive from the judiciary, reduction of government expenditure, abolition of a standing army, and the formation of peasant militias. The *Samachar Darpan* wrote: 'Should he be instrumental in securing these advantages to the country, not only the present but every future age will justly consider him benefactor to the country.' The *Bengali Spectator* was to observe later in 1842: 'It is to him that we are in a great measure indebted for the concession in regard to the privileges contained in the [1833] Charter.'

To have Indian opinion felt and heard more effectively, Rammohan seriously considered the possibility of entering the House of Commons. Siva Narayana Sen, in 'Some New Light on Raja Rammohan Roy' reports that Rammohan had written to Charles Watkins Williams-Wynn—the first president of the Royal Asiatic Society and a member of Parliament—on 16 April 1832, inquiring whether, in Wynn's opinion, he was 'eligible to sit in Parliament', asking this 'not from any ambition to assume so arduous an office but from a desire to pave the way' for his countrymen.<sup>10</sup>

Rammohan was deeply interested in the reform bill aimed at extending the right of franchise to less privileged sections of the British population. The bill elicited strong opposition from the Lords. In the opinion of the Raja, the struggle between the reformers and anti-reformers was nothing but a 'struggle between liberty and tyranny throughout the world; between justice and injustice, and between right and wrong. But ... we clearly perceive that liberal principles in politics and religion have been long gradually but steadily gaining ground notwithstanding the opposition and obstinacy of despots and bigots.'<sup>11</sup> Rammohan publicly avowed to renounce his connection with England 'if reactionary forces prevented the Reform Bill from being passed into law in the House of Commons or in the House of Lords.'<sup>12</sup> He was greatly pleased when the House of Lords finally passed the bill in June 1832. On 31 July 1832 he wrote to his first host in Liv-

**The great Hindu reformer**, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was a wonderful example of this unselfish work. He devoted his whole life to helping India. It was he who stopped the burning of widows. ... He also founded the important religious Society called the Brahmo-Samaj, and subscribed a hundred thousand dollars to found a university. He then stepped out and told them to go ahead without him. He cared nothing for fame or for results to himself.

—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 7.86

erpool, William Rathbone: 'I am now happy to find myself fully justified in congratulating you and my other friends at Liverpool in the complete success of the Reform Bills, notwithstanding the violent opposition and want of political principles on the part of the aristocrats. ... I can now feel proud of being one of your fellow subjects, and heartily rejoice that I have the infinite happiness of witnessing the salvation of the nation, nay, of the whole world.'<sup>13</sup>

Rammohan's liberal democratic temperament is seen in his attitude to Muslim character, society, culture, and rule—an attitude described as 'entirely unprejudiced and fraternal'. In public he wore the dress used in Islamic courts. Though a Hindu himself, his outlook towards Islam proves him a secularist. His tract 'Question and Answers on the Judicial system of India' bears witness to this (80).

### International Interest

Rammohan's support for the struggle for freedom, democratic rights, and liberalism was not restricted to India alone; his sympathies were cosmopolitan. His anguish knew no bounds when he got the news that 'the people of Naples after extorting a constitution from their despotic king were crushed back into servitude by the Austrian troops, in obedience to the joint mandate of the crowned heads of Russia, Prussia, Austria, Sardinia, and Naples'. In his letter of 11 August 1821 to Mr Buckingham, he wrote: 'I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own and their enemies as ours' (78).

He was consistent in his support for the Greeks in their struggle for freedom against the Turks, and

was bold enough to oppose the British occupation of Ireland. The *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* carried an article on 'Ireland, the Causes of its Distress and Discontent'.

The introduction of constitutional government in Spain and the liberation of the Spanish colonies in South America elicited an enthusiastic response from the Raja. When the news reached Calcutta, he gave a public dinner at the Town Hall.<sup>14</sup> The news of the French Revolution—which he viewed as a triumph of liberty—had also proved a source of inspiration to him.

In a letter to the minister for foreign affairs of France in 1831, he suggested the necessity of a supra-national organization for disposing of disputes among nations and also argued for greater freedom of movement across national boundaries. Made over a hundred years before the launch of the UN, this suggestion is certainly remarkable.

In sum, Rammohan stirred India up with his social and political activism. He worked for the political advancement of the country till the last day of his life. He also had the true vision of an internationalist, and his actions were in consonance with this vision. Living as we do in this era of total globalization, it is worth remembering that this is the very path that Rammohan had walked and had wanted India to walk.



### Notes and References

1. Chitta Ranjan Das, *India for Indians* (Madras: Ganesh, 1921), 56.
2. R C Chatterjee has suggested that Rammohan was the first all-round reformer in Modern India.
3. Rammohan's interests were cosmopolitan. S R Bakshi observes: 'His activities embraced various spheres of life, and everywhere he paved a new way for the future generation of Indians to follow. All the principal movements of the 19th Century—social, religious, political, and educational—originated with him.'
4. Rammohan wanted the British to be lenient towards the native people. This is evident from some of the issues taken up in the early numbers of *Sambad Kaumudi*: (i) An appeal to the government for the establishment of a school for the gratuitous instruction of poor but respectable Hindus. (ii) Humble address to the government soliciting the

extension of trial by jury to mofussil, zilla, and provincial courts of judicature. (iii) An appeal to the government to relieve the Hindu community from the inconvenience consequent upon there being only one ghat for the burning of dead bodies whereas an immense space of ground has been granted for the burial of Christians. (iv) Appeal to the government for the prevention of the exportation of the greatest part of the produce of rice from Bengal to foreign ports. (v) Appeal to the government to enable the middle class of native subjects to avail themselves of the treatment of European physicians. (vi) Appeal to the Calcutta magistrates to resort to rigorous measures for relieving the Hindu inhabitants of Calcutta from the serious grievances of Christian gentlemen driving their buggies amongst them and cutting and lashing them with whips, without distinction of sex or age, while they quietly assembled in immense numbers to see the images of their deities pass in the Chitpore Road, when many of them, through terror and consternation caused by the lashing inflicted on the spectators, fell down into drains, while others were trampled under foot by the crowd.

5. *Rammohun Roy: The Man and His Work*, comp. and ed. Amal Home (Calcutta: Rammohun Centenary Committee, 1933), 78.

6. To provide an impression of Rammohan's views on political journalism, some of the contents of the first issue of *Mirat-ul-Akhbar* are cited below:

(i) The Editor informs the public that although so many newspapers have been published in this city to gratify their readers, yet there is none in Persian for the information of those who are well versed in that language, and do not understand English, particularly the people of Upper Hindustan. He has therefore undertaken to publish a Persian newspaper every week. (ii) Government regulation respecting the period Company's servants can be absent from their duty on account of their health. (iii) Difference with China. (iv) Trial of John Hayes, Esq., judge of Tipperah. (v) Release of prisoners on the 23rd of April: King's birthday. (vi) Shipping Intelligence. (vii) Cause of enmity between Russia and the Sublime Porte. (viii) Exploits of Rungeet Singh. (ix) Abundant crop of corn this year in Hindoostan. (x) Pair of Elephants for sale. (xi) Price of Indigo and Opium. (xii) Proposal sent to the dwellers of Shajahanabad, by an officer of the Honourable Company, pointing out the advantages of having an English school instituted in that city, to which however the Natives paid no attention.

Interestingly, on 20 April 1822, the *Calcutta*

*Journal* of Mr James Silk Buckingham eulogized editorially the appearance of this Persian weekly introduced by Rammohan, who was 'a man of liberal sentiments and by no means deficient in loyalty, well-versed in the Persian language and possessing a competent knowledge of English' (561).

7. Sophia Dobson Collet, *Life and Letters of Rammohun Roy*, ed. Hem Chandra Sen (Calcutta: publisher unknown, 1913). The *Edinburgh Magazine* wrote in support of Rammohan: 'Men in power hostile to the freedom of the Press, which is a disagreeable check upon their conduct, when unable to discover any real evil arising from its existence, have attempted to make the world imagine that it might, in some possible contingency, afford the means of combination against the government, but not to mention that extraordinary emergencies would warrant measures, which in ordinary times are totally unjustifiable, your Majesty is well aware that a free Press has never yet caused a revolution in any part of the world. ... Where no freedom of the Press existed, and grievances consequently remained unrepresented and unredressed, innumerable revolutions have taken place in all parts of the globe.'

8. B N Dasgupta, *Raja Rammohan Roy, The Last Phase* (Delhi: Uppal, 1982), 76.

9. In volume eight of the appendix to the report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, a side note ('Evidence before the Committee'; 366) suggests that Rammohan had been examined by a committee of the House of Commons.

10. *Modern Review*, 66.4 (October 1939), 466-7.

11. *Rammohun Roy: The Man and His Work*, 60.

12. *Raja Rammohan Roy, The Last Phase*, 144.

13. *Rammohun Roy: The Man and His Work*, 60.

14. A letter from an English friend of the Raja residing in Calcutta appeared in the September 1823 number of the *Edinburgh Magazine*. It said: 'But the lively interest he (Rammohan) took in the progress of South American emancipation, eminently marks the greatness and benevolence of his mind, and was created, he said, by the perusal of the detestable barbarities inflicted by Spain to subjugate, and afterwards continued by the Inquisition, to retain in bondage that unhappy country. "What!" replied he (upon being asked why he had celebrated by illuminations, by an elegant dinner to about sixty Europeans, and by a speech composed and delivered in English by himself at his house in Calcutta, on the arrival of important news of the success of the Spanish Patriots), "ought I to be insensible to the sufferings of my fellow-creatures wherever they are, or however unconnected by interests, religion or language?"'



# Varanasi: The City of Saints, Sages, and Savants

Swami Varishthananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

**B**ANARAS, the city of Baba Vishwanatha, is unique in more than one way. Much of its history is yet to be written. It has rarely been an important political centre, and the rise and fall of its rulers throughout its long history has had little impact on the story of the city's sanctity. What makes it special in comparison to such other ancient cities as Jerusalem, Beijing, and Athens is the fact that while the latter are moved today by an ethos very different from that which moved them in ancient times, Kashi, to a large extent, has maintained an age-old and hoary living tradition right up to the present day, and is therefore the cumulative face of the Hindu tradition.

## The City of Shiva

Varanasi is the city of Bhagavan Shiva: Shiva, the Mahayogi, the lord of yogis; Shiva, the Nataraja, the lord of dance and music; Shiva, the *gyotirlinga*, the Light Supreme, Knowledge Supreme! Varanasi is truly the city of enlightenment, of illumination, of light.

Legend has it that when Bhagavan Shiva, the mountain ascetic, descended from the realm of perpetual meditation and married Parvati, daughter of the Himalayas, he chose the city of Varanasi, a beautiful place spanning a radius of five *krośas* (ten miles), as their home; a move that played a major role in the ascendancy of Shaivism in north India. Over the centuries, Kashi's connection with Shiva became so firm that by the time of the *Kashi Khanda*, this city came to be seen as the 'original ground' created by Shiva and Parvati, upon which

they stood at the beginning of time; a place from which the whole of creation came forth in the beginning, and to which it will all return in the fiery *pralaya* at the end of time. The legendary king Divodasa had once managed to occupy Kashi and evict Shiva and other deities on the strength of his virtue, dharma. After numerous efforts by the gods to induce Divodasa to err from dharma had failed, Shiva sent one of his attendants (*ganas*), Nikumbha, to empty the city for him. Nikumbha appeared in a dream to a barber, telling him to establish and worship the image of Nikumbha *gana* (Ganesha) at the edge of the city. The barber did this, and Nikumbha Ganesha, the 'lord of *ganas*', became popular with the citizens of Kashi for granting boons to those who propitiated him. Now, King Divodasa's wife, Suyasha, was childless. She worshipped Nikumbha on several occasions to get a son, but her prayers were not answered. Enraged, Divodasa ordered the shrine of Nikumbha Ganesha destroyed. This provided Nikumbha the opportunity to pronounce a curse on the king and have the city emptied of all its inhabitants. When the city was vacated, Shiva arrived and re-established his residence there. Apparently Parvati was not fond of the city at first, but Shiva said to her, 'I will not leave my home, for this home of mine is "Never-forsaken; Avimukta".' Such is Shiva's attachment to Kashi, the Avimuktapuri.

## City of Saints

The legend of King Harishchandra is often narrated as the benchmark of an ideal life. He was known to always keep his word and never utter a lie. These

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twin qualities were tested heavily through various circumstances that led him to penury and separation from his family; but he never flinched from his principles. The sage Vishwamitra once approached him at Ayodhya and, reminding him of an earlier promise he had made, asked Harishchandra to give him his entire kingdom. Harishchandra immediately made good his word and started walking away with his wife and son, *sans* property, to Banaras. But the sage then demanded an additional amount as *dakṣiṇā* (honorarium). To pay this, Harishchandra, with no money at hand, had to sell his wife Chandramati and son Rohita to a brahmana family, and himself to a guard in charge of collecting taxes for the bodies to be cremated at the local cremation ground. Some time later, Rohita was bitten by a snake and died. Chandramati took him to the cremation ground. Seeing her with the dead child, Harishchandra was stung by pangs of agony. But, duty-bound as he was, he asked for the taxes required for cremation. Chandramati offered him the only dress she had, the sari she was wearing, as tax. When she proceeded to remove her dress, the devas along with Vishwamitra appeared on the scene and, pleased with the unassailable character of the king, brought his son back to life, and offered a heavenly abode to the king, the queen, and all their subjects. This moving story is known to have particularly affected Mahatma Gandhi, who, after having watched a play on Harishchandra as a child, became deeply influenced by the virtue of truthfulness.

In keeping with this tradition, many great saints and sages made Banaras either their home or their workplace. Maharshi Veda Vyasa, credited with writing the Puranas and the Mahabharata, is reputed to have spent his life working in Kashi. He composed his *Brahma Sutra* in this very city. Sri Shankaracharya too came to Kashi and made it his workplace for quite some time—

arguing that this especially sacred land would give him the zeal and energy to work in a more devoted manner. Many of his works were composed here in Kashi. In modern times, Swami Vishwarupananda also composed his Bengali magnum opus *Vedanta Darshan* in Varanasi at the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama under very trying conditions.

### The Bhakti Movement

जाति पाँति पूछे न कोई । हरि को भजे सो हरिका होई ॥

Let no one ask a person's caste or with whom one eats; devoted to Hari, one becomes Hari's own.

This was declared by *Ramananda* (c.1400–c.1470), the pioneer of the medieval bhakti movement in north India. He belonged to the lineage of Ramanuja [this fact, though, has been contested by many Ramanandis] and lived a life of self-surrender and dedication. Once he went on a pilgrimage to south India. On his return, his companions refused to admit him into their fold, arguing that he might not have adhered to strict rules regarding food and other rituals during his long absence. This was a rude shock to him. He came out of the fold and became a liberal advocate of bhakti, and practised severe austerities at the Panchaganga Ghat in Banaras. According to him, Sri Rama was the Supreme Spirit and humanity was one big family.

*Kabir* (1440–1518) · The adopted son of a poor Muslim weaver couple, Kabir was not bound by strict rituals or religious discipline, which made him an unconventional poet and mystic. His life centred on Kashi. He could not formally claim anyone as guru because of his humble origin, but was drawn to Ramananda's teachings. One day while Ramananda was going down the ghat for a bath in the Ganga, his foot touched a human body in the darkness. Startled, he exclaimed, 'Ram, Ram.' Immediately, Kabir

Kabir: unconventional poet and mystic



got up and with folded hands announced that, since he had given him the Ram-mantra, Ramananda had made him his *śiṣya*—regardless of his religion. He also told him about his yearning to reach God. A pleased Ramananda accepted him as disciple.

Kabir was a saint of the masses. His simple compositions—*dohas*, couplets, and *chaupais*, quatrains—go straight to the heart, are easy to remember, and have remained immensely popular, enabling people to grasp the essentials of a simple and profound life in the spirit. His admonitions remain equally popular:

माला तो कर में फिरै, जीभ फिरै मुख माहीं ।  
मनवा तो चहुँ दिसी फिरै, यह तो सुमिरन नाहीं ॥

The rosary keeps moving in the hand, the tongue in the mouth, and the mind in all four directions; this surely is not remembrance.

*Guru Ravidas* (c.1398–c.1448) · Born in the cobbler community, Guru Ravidas (popularly known as Raidas) was a firm believer in karma. He did not worship any particular deity, believing in the one and only omniscient and omnipresent God:

कृष्ण करीम राम हरि राघव जब लग एक न पेखा ।  
बेद कबेद कुरान पुरातन सहज एक नही लेखा ।  
जोई जोई पूजिये सोई सोई काची ।  
कहै रैदास मैं ताइकु पूजुँ जाके ठाँव नाँव नहीं कोई ॥

*Trailanga Swami image in front of Devi Mangala Kali, Trailanga Swami Math*

Krishna, Karim, Ram, Hari, and Raghav—when none of them have been found near; and the old Vedas, rules of conduct, and Quran are none written in easy style; then whoever one worships turns out to be frail. So, says Raidas, I worship that which has neither any location, nor a name.

As news of this self-taught seer began to spread, people started thronging his humble abode seeking solace and advice. Conservative brahmanas of Kashi could not stand the popularity of this ‘untouchable saint’, and a complaint was lodged against him to the king on the grounds that he was working against age-old social norms. But when the king called Raidas to his court amidst an assembly of learned men, no one could match his spiritual knowledge and insights.

One legend describes Raidas as Mirabai’s guru. One of her compositions dedicated to Raidas lends credence to this belief.

*Tulsidas* (1543?–1623) · The legend of Tulsidas’s passionate attachment to his wife Ratnavali (Buddhimati) is well known. Once when she went to her father’s place, Tulsidas followed her. Ratnavali felt shamed by his inordinate attachment and admonished him: ‘You have such fondness for this body of mine which is but skin and bones; if only you had the same devotion to Rama, you would

not have had the fear of samsara.’ These words struck gold. Tulsidas abandoned home and became an ascetic. Not only was he able to redirect his attachment and convert it into bhakti, he could reach a state where he could say with the fullness of conviction:

सीया राममय सब जग जानि ।  
करउँ प्रनाम जोरि जुग पानी ॥

Knowing the entire world to be permeated by Sita and Rama, I join my palms and offer pranams.

The literary excellence and popularity of his *Ram-charit-manas*, the Hindi rendition of the Ramayana, led Nabha, the author of *Bhaktamal*, to suggest that



*Swami Bhaskarananda, inset, and his samadhi mandir*

Tulsidas was Valmiki reincarnated. Tulsidas's devotion to Rama found further expression in nearly a dozen works, including *Vinay-patrika*, *Dohavali*, *Kavitavali*, and *Gitavali*.

He spent a good portion of his life in Varanasi, where he passed away at Asighat.

### **Saints of Modern Times**

*Trailanga Swami* (c.1607–1887), famed for his yogic powers, is easily the most well-known of modern saints who lived at Kashi. Having met him at Manikarnika Ghat, Sri Ramakrishna described him thus: 'I saw that the universal Lord Himself was using his body as a vehicle for manifestation. He was in an exalted state of knowledge. There was no body-consciousness in him. Sand there became so hot in the sun that no one could set foot on it. But he lay comfortably on it.' He is reputed to have lived for nearly 280 years, over half of which he spent at Kashi. He freely roamed the streets, living sometimes at Asi Ghat or Dashashwamedha Ghat, at other times at the Vedavyasa Ashrama at Hanuman Ghat, and finally on a huge block of stone in the open courtyard of Mangal Das Bhatta's small home at Panchaganga Ghat. He could read people's minds like books, and drank poisonous liquids by the bowlful without dying. Once he was put in jail for violating city laws. Soon he was found walking on the jail roof. The truths of the scriptures about God-realized souls were clearly manifest in his being.

*Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati* (1833–1899) was also reputed for his austerity and saintly char-

acter. Getting deeply interested in spiritual life when he was only eighteen, he travelled all over India as a wandering monk for many years. But, 'even though I practised such austerities, I gained very little; ignorance and sorrow were as deep as ever. Finally, [in 1868], I sat down here in this garden [Anandabag, near Durga Mandir] and resolved, "May God be realized or may this body die." Now, you see, I get a little abiding

bliss.' He too was reputed to have yogic powers, and had foreseen his own death. Though his influence spanned all sections of society, the transformation of character of several notorious pandas wrought by his influence is especially worth mentioning.

*Swami Karpatriji* (1907–1982) is a more recent figure who, renouncing family and all material luxuries, set out on his quest of the Unknown at the age of seventeen. Later he became a preacher of religion and did pioneering work in safeguarding the Indian tradition, having established the Dharma Sangha in Kashi for this purpose in 1940. He also published a Hindi daily *Sanmarg*, which reflected his religious and political views, and composed various books in Hindi, including *Vichar-piyush* and *Ramayan Mimamsa*. Karpatriji truly was knowledge, action, and devotion personified.

### **The Literary Tradition**

*Bhartendu Harishchandra* (1849–1882) is known as the father of modern Hindi literature. A poet, dramatist, journalist, and critic, he successfully brought about the transition of Hindi from the medieval tradition (*rīti*) to the modern era. His writings are marked by remarkable realism and capture 'the agonies of India: unrest of the middle-class, hopes and aspirations of the youth, and urge for progress and removal of injustice'. He was also a social and religious activist, an accomplished actor, polemicist, and wit. The *Kavi-vachan-sudha* started by him in 1867 was the first journal published in the Hindi language. He followed it up with the *Harishchan-*

**Banarasi culture** held a special meaning, especially for those who were nurtured by it. It symbolized a way of life, characterized by the twin features of *mauj* [enjoyment, conviviality, festivity] and *masti* [contentment, serenity, buoyancy, heartiness, and even recklessness]. ... There was yet a third aspect that had a balancing effect on this *mauj* and *masti* that we shall call *anasakti*, or a detached outlook. Thus, while sipping honey from the flower of the jovial and ever-festive City, it was not unusual for Banarasis to withdraw from their gay environs and become other-worldly. In fact, this other-worldliness is so strong, so palpable, so nearly tangible in the ethos of the City, that it may have been almost impossible for Banarasis to remain insensitive to this underlying spirit of the place, and consequently, get lost in worldly enjoyments. —*Varanasi at the Crossroads*, 718–9.

*dra Magazine* (later called *Harishchandra Patrika*), and the *Balbodhini Patrika*. He was conferred the title ‘Bharatendu, moon of India’ by his fellow Banarasis for his remarkable achievements.

*Jaishankar Prasad* (1889–1937) is credited with initiating the *chhayavada* movement in modern Hindi literature, characterized by romanticism, mysticism, and symbolism. Prasad is especially known for his prose writings, though *Kamayani*, an allegorical epic poem on Manu, is regarded by many as his best work. Apart from being a poet, he was also a philosopher, historian, and sculptor. His writings are an exquisite blend of art, philosophy, and history.

*Munshi Premchand* (1880–1936) is the pen-name of Dhanpat Rai, one of the greatest literary figures of modern Hindi and Urdu literature. Having lost his parents at a very young age, he faced poverty and struggle early in life, and these remained with him till death. His stories and novels reflect the harsh realities of life.

Premchand inaugurated the genre of fiction and made the short story a legitimate literary form in Hindi literature. His stories make a moral point or convey deep psychological truths. He was also active in the Swadeshi movement. In fact his very

first collection of stories, *Soz-e-Watan* (Dirge of the Nation), was labelled seditious and destroyed. The first story of this anthology was ‘*Duniya Ka Sabse Annmol Ratan*, The Most Precious Jewel in the World’; and this was ‘the last drop of blood shed in the cause of the country’s freedom’.

*Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya* (1861–1946) was a great patriot, eminent educationist, renowned journalist, prominent social and religious reformer, erudite scholar, able parliamentarian, and eloquent speaker. A giant among men, Pandit Malaviya not only helped lay the solid foundation of Indian nationalism, but also worked tirelessly, year after year, to build—brick by brick and stone by stone—the noble edifice of India’s freedom. He was one of the few individuals to become the president of the Indian National Congress thrice: at Lahore (1909), Delhi (1918), and Calcutta (1933). Among his many achievements, the Banaras Hindu University stands out as a lasting legacy. The university came to be known as the ‘capital of knowledge’ even in his lifetime. He chose Banaras as the site for this university ‘because of the centuries-old tradition of learning, wisdom, and spirituality inherent to the place. His vision was to blend the best of Indian education culled from the ancient centres of learning—Takshashila and Nalanda and other hallowed institutions—with the best tradition of modern universities of the West.’ And in this he was remarkably successful.

### **The Tradition of Music**

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, ‘Music is the highest art and, to those who understand, is the highest worship.’ Banaras has its own rich and unique history and tradition of music. Shiva is the presiding deity of Varanasi; and he is the master of dance and music. According to legend, apsaras, gandharvas, and kinnaras have lived in Varanasi and contributed to its rich musical tradition.

The Buddhist Jatakas have many examples of highly talented courtesans with special talent in music and the arts. This tradition of music continued right down to the modern-day *kathaks* (he-

editary musicians) and *tawaiifs* (courtesans). The medieval Bhakti movement contributed greatly to the development and popular dissemination of religious singing and music. The bhajans of the medieval saints remain immensely popular.

Many reputed *gharanas* or schools of music developed in Banaras over the last few centuries. These included the Senia (from the lineage of the illustrious Tansen) and Mishra (Prasaddhu-Manohar) *gharanas* in vocal music, Ramsahay *gharana* in tabla, Badal Mishra *gharana* in sarangi, and the *gharanas* of Mian Vilatu and Nandalal in shahnai. The nawabs of Awadh, the rajas of Kashi, and many other rajas and nobles who settled down in Kashi patronized music and the arts. Many musical styles—*Dhrupad*, *Khayal*, *Dhamar*, *Dadra*, *Hori*, and *Kajri*, among others—flourished in the rich environment of Banaras.

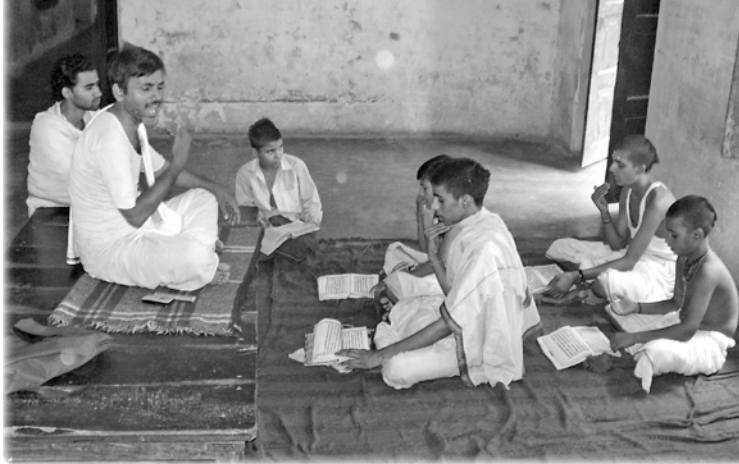
Banaras has produced a galaxy of great musicians who are revered as legends in their own right. Ustad Bismillah Khan, Pandit Kishan Maharaj, and Girija Devi are three famous names of recent times.

Qamaruddin, famous as Bismillah Khan (1916–2006), spent his childhood in Varanasi, where his uncle was the official shahnai player in the Vishwanatha temple. He not only introduced the shahnai to the concert stage with his recital at the All India Music Conference at Calcutta in 1937, but also single-handedly took it to world renown. He received honorary doctorates from Banaras Hindu

Ustad Bismillah Khan



University and Vishwa Bharati University and in 2001 became only the third classical musician to be awarded the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian honour in India. Despite receiving such acclaim, he always remained his simple self. He believed that 'musicians are supposed to be heard not seen'. In



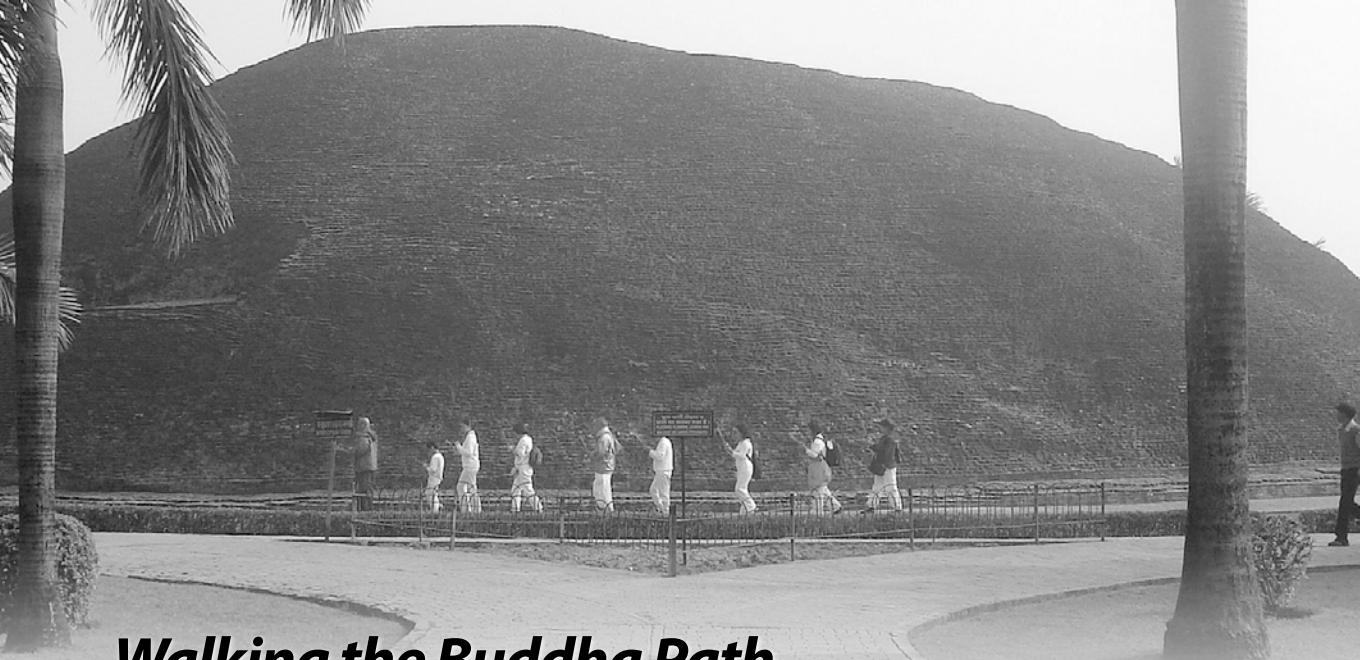
Traditional scriptural study at Kathiya Baba Ashrama

his last days he turned down requests from the central and state governments for treatment elsewhere, as he would not leave his favourite Banaras.

Padma Vibhushan Pandit Kishan Maharaj (b.1923) is one of the most renowned, respected, and admired tabla players of our times. Trained by his father, Pandit Hari Maharaj, and his uncle, the famous Pandit Kanthe Maharaj, he has dominated the world of Indian classical percussion in a career spanning more than fifty years, evolving his own style with its highly skilled *layakari* (perfect timing). He has been a versatile accompanist to a variety of genres of classical music and dance. He is also known for his talent for improvisation during performances, introducing the most complex *tālas* (beats) with odd numbers of *matras* (notes).

Girija Devi (b.1929) was born in a music-loving family of Varanasi and was initiated into music at the tender age of five. Known as the leading exponent of the Banaras *gharana* of *thumri*, Girija Devi has an amazing proficiency in a wide range of Hindustani vocal music: *khayal*, *thumri*, *dadra*, *tappa*, *kajri*, *hori*, *chaiti*, and *bhajan*. A recipient of the Padmabhushan and Sangeet Natak Akademi awards, her care for students is reflected in her successful career as a guru for over a decade at the ITC Sangeet Research Academy, Kolkata.

Swami Vivekananda once said, 'Art, science, and religion are but three different ways of expressing a single truth.' The saints, sages, and savants of Varanasi verily express that single truth in their own inimitable style. The resultant melody is vibrant Varanasi, the city of Shiva. (To be concluded)



BPILGRIM

## ***Walking the Buddha Path***

**Dr Dipak Sengupta**

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

*Pilgrims walking the Buddha path  
at Makutabandhana Chaitya, Kasia*

**D**USK was setting in. We were standing in front of the Ashokan pillar. It was shining in the last rays of the sun. Five lines became prominent in the light and shade: '*Hida budhe jate sakymuniti ... lummini game*; Here in Lumbini, Sakyamuni Buddha was born'. Ashoka probably stood exactly at this spot looking at the inscription, his heart filled with grace, and bowed in reverence to the Enlightened One. A group of pilgrims from Thailand was circumambulating the pillar, led by a monk. Everybody was reciting some mantra from a book. Some pilgrims were lighting candles on the ruins of a stupa. A few were meditating, scattered around the lawn. The pilgrims come mainly from Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, and most of them stay in their monasteries for days. We felt like being absorbed in that serene environment. We could feel the *shunyata* gradually covering us. But it was time to leave.

### ***The Modern Monasteries***

Since the founding of the Lumbini Development Zone, Buddhist nations and groups from all over the world have constructed extravagant monaster-

ies, temples, and gompas. Each reflects the unique interpretation of dharma and culture of the home country. The South-North road starts from the eternal flame and runs for three miles, dividing the mile-wide Development Zone in two, and ending at Panditarama Lumbini International Vipassana Meditation Centre. The west side of the road has been set aside for Mahayana monasteries, and the east side for those of the Theravada school.

The next day we were back with Ramesh to visit the monasteries. The first monastery we encountered was Drubgyud Choeling Gompa, a Tibetan style gompa built by a Nepali group. Next we saw a giant chaitya, a Tibetan reliquary. The most impressive was the Zhong Hua Chinese monastery. We entered the premises through a giant gateway flanked by Confucian deities as if we were entering the Forbidden City. Inside the courtyard was a garden with a few flower pots and trimmed grass cover. Beyond the garden was the main temple. There was a gigantic golden statue of Buddha touching the earth, with a bowl in his left hand. We felt quite insignificant in the imposing surroundings. Quarters for the monks stood on

both sides of the courtyard.

As we walked along the road, we saw monasteries on both sides. On the left we found a South Korean Buddhist temple, a Vietnamese pagoda style temple called Phat Quoc Tu, and the temple of the Austrian Geden International Foundation. But most interesting was the great Drigung Kagyud Lotus Stupa, being constructed by the German Tara Foundation. It had a domed ceiling painted with Buddha's life stories. A Buddha statue graced the centre of the main platform, statues of great Buddhist saints and scholars surrounding it on a shelf-like structure. One of the German disciples identified for us some of the figures: Nagarjuna, Ananda, Nagasena, and Vasubandhu. There were at least fifty of them. Their appearance was obviously imagined, and there was no way to recognize who was who. But the devotees insisted that this was what they looked like. There were few more monasteries after that. On the right were the monasteries of the Theravada School. The Royal Thai Buddhist monastery was an imposing wat or Thai-style temple. Exquisite figures on the edges of the sloping roof epitomized fine Thai handiwork. The Myanmar Golden Temple was a pagoda-type structure with a corn-cob shikara. Lokamani Cula Pagoda was also from southern Myanmar. Going further, we visited the Sri Lankan monastery. We found the World Peace Pagoda, built by a Japanese group, just outside the development zone.

While we were walking down the road from one monastery to another, Ramesh, in his own style, was giving us a running commentary about the place, the people, and the time. He was complaining that, except for meeting the few hawkers who delivered fresh vegetables at their doorsteps, the monks had no interaction with the local people. All other ingredients and requirements were flown

in from the home country. This was true for all the monasteries. It seemed almost as if the monks had never left their home. They never deviated from their national food and lifestyle. Even the cooks and other staff were recruited from their respective countries. To Ramesh this was foreign soil carved out of his native land. Though we came in the late morning, the monasteries seemed to be deserted. There were fresh flowers and still-burning incense in front of the Buddha, but there was nobody to be seen, no one to talk to. As per the *Vinaya Pitaka*, all meals have to be consumed before midday; after that, the monks retire to their rooms, and all is closed for rest of the day. Ramesh suspected that the monks were leading a lazy and easy life.

We met a couple of Germans in the Tara Foundation Temple. They were supervising the construction going on. One of them at least could speak English, so we had a little chat with him. One Tibetan Lama had migrated to Germany after the occupation of Tibet by China. He settled there and established the Tara Foundation. They finally decided to shift the main centre to Lumbini—a good choice indeed. This was basically a school for teaching meditation, vipassana, and a few languages like Tibetan and Sanskrit. What would the inmates do after leaving the school? Some of them would go back to normal life; quite a few would teach meditation and ancient scriptures. They were supposed to be becoming popular throughout Europe.

Before initiating this Buddha tour I had done some homework on a few Buddhist scriptures. I

*Lumbini: Chinese Temple, Lotus Stupa, painting detail from the Lotus Stupa (from bottom left)*



remembered the *nissayas* or eremitical habits supposed to be sworn to during ordination into monastic life, prescribed in the *Mahavagga: arannaka*, living in the forests; *pindapatika*, living solely on alms; *pamsukulika*, dressing in cast-off clothes; and *techivarika*, possessing only three pieces of clothing. All these rules, strictly followed by the Enlightened One himself, were probably no longer taken literally. At least, looking at these gorgeous buildings we thought it so.

After the tour it was again a long rickshaw ride. We did not realize that we had crossed the border and entered India. Suddenly we found Ramesh standing in front of a trekker jeep. He managed seats for two of us in front with the driver. We had a comfortable ride to Gorakhpur. By the time we reached the city it was already dark.

### Maha-parinirvana

Next morning saw us in a rented car with our driver, Sachdev Prasad, driving to Kasia, a small hamlet some 60 km from Gorakhpur. This unsung place was originally called Kushinagar: the place of Buddha's *maha-parinirvana*. The details of the last days of the Enlightened One are recorded in the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, a part of the *Digha Nikaya*. Buddha's last journey started from Vaishali, an important city in ancient times situated north of today's Patna. After staying a few days in Ambapali's mango grove, Buddha left Vaishali with Ananda and his entourage of bhikkus and bhikkunis. They halted in Beluva, the next village. Buddha then sent all the monks back to Vaishali to spend the rainy season there; the two old men, Buddha and Ananda, spent the rainy season at Beluva. And here it was that 'the Blessed One thus mindfully and clearly compre-



Buddha in the Chinese temple, Lumbini

hending renounced his will to live on'. He announced to Ananda, 'Before long the Parinibbana of the Tathagata will come about. Three months hence the Tathagata will utterly pass away.'<sup>5</sup> Buddha was withering away day by day, and Ananda was feeling helpless. In the meantime, Ajatashatru, king of Magadha and a disciple of Buddha, attacked and annexed Vajji, a confederation of tribal states. King Prasenajit's son Virudhaka massacred the Shakyas, Buddha's own people. The tribal republics were

doomed; empire-building had started. The turn of events must have saddened Buddha. This was the land he had roamed for the last forty years of his life preaching non-violence and compassion.

Buddha and Ananda arrived at Pava and were staying at Chunda's mango grove, along with a large number of bhikkus. Chunda, a metal worker, came to the Enlightened one and with respect invited him for a meal. By his silence the Blessed One consented.

In the next forenoon the Blessed One went to Chunda's abode and sat down with his bowl. Chunda had prepared choice food, hard and soft, including a dish of *sukara-maddava* (probably pork or a kind of mushroom). The meal was served.

After tasting the *sukara-maddava*, Buddha spoke to Chunda: 'Whatever, Cunda, is left over of the *sukara-maddava*, bury that in a pit. For I do not see in all this world ... anyone who could eat it and entirely digest it except the Tathagata alone.' And then, 'the Blessed One instructed Cunda the metalworker in the Dhamma, and roused, edified, and gladdened him. After this he rose from his seat and departed. And soon after the Blessed One had eaten the meal provided by Cunda the metalworker, a dire sickness fell upon him, even dysentery, and

he suffered sharp and deadly pains. But the Blessed One endured them mindfully, clearly comprehending and unperturbed' (4.19–21).

Buddha and Ananda left for Kushinagar. They crossed the river Hiranyavati and went to the Malla's sal grove in the vicinity of Kushinagar. 'Please, Ananda, prepare for me a couch between the twin sala trees, with the head to the north. I am weary, Ananda, and want to lie down.' Ananda did as he was asked. The Blessed one laid down on his right side, in the lion's posture, resting one foot upon the other, head resting on the right hand and the left hand laid across the torso. The *sutta* continues:

The twin sala trees broke out in full bloom, though it was not the season of flowering. And the blossoms rained upon the body of the Tathagata and dropped and scattered and were strewn upon it in worship of the Tathagata. And celestial *mandarava* flowers and heavenly sandalwood powder from the sky rained down upon the body of the Tathagata, and dropped and scattered and were strewn upon it in worship of the Tathagata. And the sound of heavenly voices and heavenly instruments made music in the air out of reverence for the Tathagata (5.4).

As Buddha lay dying, Ananda stepped off in grief to the vihara and wept. Buddha called him back and said, 'Enough, Ananda! Do not grieve, do not lament! For have I not taught from the very beginning that with all that is dear and beloved there must be change, separation, and severance? Of that which is born, come into being, compounded, and subject to decay, how can one say: "May it not come to dissolution!"?' The venerable Ananda was comforted, and said 'Let it not be, Lord, that the Blessed One should pass away in this mean place, this uncivilized township in the midst of the jungle, a mere outpost of the province.' Buddha then told Ananda that long before, there had been a universal monarch, Maha-sudarshana, who had ruled over a great kingdom. Kushinagar had been the capital of that kingdom. The capital had been prosperous and well-populated and frequented by people from different directions. There had been plenty of food and people were happy and joyous.

Parinirvana  
Temple,  
Kushinagar



The time for the Blessed One's departure came. He spoke his last words: '*Vayadhamma samkhara, appamadena sampadetha*; All compound things are liable to decay; strive for your salvation with diligence.' Then the Blessed one, passing through the stages of the four *jhanas* and the spheres of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither-perception-nor-non-perception, attained the state of cessation of perception of feeling. Then he passed through all these stages again in reverse, and again passing through the four *jhanas*, he attained *parinirvana*. As Buddha passed away there came a tremendous earthquake and the thunders rolled across the heavens as if the end of creation was at hand. It was during the last quarter of the night that he left this world, on the night of the full moon in the month of Vaishakh. Eighty years before, the day of Siddhartha's birth had also been the full moon night in Vaishakh. And on that night under the Bodhi tree when Siddhartha attained enlightenment and became Buddha, then too it had been the full moon night in Vaishakh. Thus the night of the full moon in the month of Vaishakh is called the Thrice Blessed Day.

### Kushinagar

In 637 CE, Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang travelled from Vaishali north-west through a great forest to reach *Kou-shih-na-ka-lo* or Kushinagar. He visited the spot of Buddha's 'ultimate extinguishing' in a grove of sal trees. A temple containing a giant image of the recumbent Buddha had been built there. He found a stupa next to it which had been constructed by Ashoka, and which, though in ruins, was still some 200 feet high. A stone pillar in front of the stupa recorded the circumstances of Buddha's death.



### Buddha's Maha-parinirvana

BPILGRIM

Taking his cue from the travel details of the Chinese monk, Alexander Cunningham, the chief of the Archaeological Survey of India, identified a small village called Kasia as Kushinagar, the place of the *parinirvana*. That was in 1875.

Cunningham's assistant A C L Carlleyle took charge of excavating the relevant places at Kasia. The dig provided dramatic confirmation of Cunningham's identification of this as the site of the Buddha's *parinirvana*. In Carlleyle's words, 'After digging to the depth of about 10 feet, I came upon what appeared to be the upper part of the thigh of a colossal recumbent statue of stone. ... I then hurried on the excavations, until I had uncovered the entire length of a colossal recumbent statue of Buddha, lying in a chamber which was about 30 feet in length by nearly 12 feet in breadth.'

We were standing in front of the statue. Buddha was lying on his right side, as he had lain between the sal trees some 2,500 years ago. The temple, on a raised platform, was not very impressive. The walls around were without any ornamentation. In stern simplicity the lying Buddha looked magnanimous. The body was draped with a dark brown satin cloth; only the feet were exposed. There is a custom among South Asian devotees to offer a small piece of gold leaf to the Blessed One, and to stick it on the statue. Thus, in time, the statue gradually becomes golden. I witnessed this custom in Bangkok. With more and more devotees coming to Kushinagar, the nirvana Buddha too has become golden; only a few black spots still remaining show the actual colour of the rock. There were some mourning figures inscribed on the pedestal; the centre one was supposed to be the figure of the donor. The statue

was carved probably during the Gupta period.

Light from the setting sun came in through the open door on the west and shone on the gilded face of the Blessed One, so serene and compassionate. A group of Burmese monks was circumambulating the statue chanting mantras. I stood against the wall in a meditative mood, immersed in the holiness of the environment.

Sachdev took us to the back of the chaitya and showed us ruins of a small stupa, which looked like a pile of weathered bricks. This was the site where the Blessed One took his final rest, lying between two sal trees. The sal grove is no more today. Not far from the place stood a statue of Buddha some ten feet high made of some bluish stone. This was said to be a thousand years old.

Next we went to Makutabandhana Chaitya, about a kilometre from the Parinirvana Temple. This was the place where Buddha's body was cremated. A large stupa of broken bricks was surrounded by a small garden with flowers and a lawn. The stupa is said to have been built by Ashoka. A bus full of Japanese tourists came. They bowed down in front of the stupa, clicked their cameras, the flashes lighting the two-thousand year-old bricks, and left in a hurry. The place was quiet again. Dusk was setting in, and Sachdev was pushing us to head for the city. The road through the sal forest was already dark. Sachdev told us that below this area were the military bunkers where weapons of war were stocked. What a contradiction it was. This was the place blessed by Buddha on his departing journey! ☸

### Reference

5. *Last Days of the Buddha*, 3.10, 46.

# Jerusalem: Crossroads of History

Dr Saibal Gupta

(Continued from the previous issue)

*Dome in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*

**V**ia Dolorosa · We re-enter the maze of streets in the Christian quarter and cross small courtyards and cafes with people sitting and talking; there are good houses with common walls. We enter the Via Dolorosa, the route that Christ took carrying the cross. The route is punctuated by fourteen stations, marking the places where the events from Christ's sentencing, through carrying the cross—including places where he fell—to his crucifixion and burial took place. The last five stations are found within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre itself. Devotees who walk the route, touching the plaques and other objects of remembrance, know these events at every station. We arrive at a place where there is a small barred gate in a wall guarded by a dark man; the passage continues beside it to a courtyard. The gate guards the entrance to the Mosque of Umar, and the passage leads to the small courtyard in front of The Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I ask Joe whether it is possible to enter the mosque; he says no.

**Church of the Holy Sepulchre** · So we move towards the church, and find its gate in the narrow stone facade ajar. A Muslim family has kept the key to this door for generations. The picture of the present incumbent was published in *Time* a

short time back. It was probably a solution to the conflicting claims of Greek, Roman, Armenian, and Coptic churches, each of which control parts of the present church and conduct services. In any case, the church has been destroyed and rebuilt repeatedly; the last rebuilding was by the Crusaders, and it has been in its present form since 1801. I ask Joe about the Muslim doorkeeper, but he has never heard about him. This church is the site of the crucifixion of Jesus, and of the tomb in which he was buried and from which he resurrected. The site is disputed by some, but recent excavations in the vicinity have shown remnants of what could have been the second North Wall of Jerusalem to the south and east of the church. It is recorded that Jesus was crucified just outside the city wall and that the burial took place in the immediate vicinity. So it is possible that this is the correct site.

We enter through the gate, and right in front of us is a slab of stone supported by wires like a cradle. This is supposed to be the slab of stone on which Christ's body was laid after bringing him down from the cross. I touch the stone and then my forehead—that seems to surprise Joe. I do not know whether he was surprised when I did likewise at the Western Wall, because he was behind me. Within the church



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, WASHINGTON DC

*Via  
Dolorosa,  
early 20th  
century*

we find large, dimly-lit halls with very high domed ceilings, each built as a shrine by different Christian Churches. In the highest-domed central hall is a shrine built as a small chapel with a narrow interior that houses, first, a small quadrangular well with two candles burning on its edge, and then further on, a narrow passage that one has to crawl through; beyond that, in the crypt, is the burial tomb of Christ. In the tomb, a maximum of three people can crouch at a time. The whole place is very dark. The chapel faces the next hall that belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church. People are taking pictures so I also try. As I am trying to photograph the interior of the small chapel, a priest gruffly asks me to move on. I am not sure whether I would be allowed to enter, so Joe and I come out of the church. Outside, I think, why not try? So I ask Joe to wait outside, as he is not interested, and go back inside. There is a queue in front of the chapel with some people holding candles. I don't want to go to the end of the queue and wait a long time and become conspicuous. So I insert myself in the middle of the line, in full view of the priest guarding the entrance. Others do not object. I think that if I am challenged I can say that I treated Mother Teresa, but nobody challenges me.

So I enter and do my pranams both at the well that was the site of the crucifixion and at the tomb. I feel the satisfaction of a holy mission completed.

### ***The Tumult of History***

Jerusalem occupies a central place in the spiritual and emotive perceptions and aspirations of three of the world's major religions. Each of them looks upon it as the 'holy city', a prototype of heaven on earth. The incessant strife that this city has witnessed is perhaps a reflection of the dogmatic differences between these religions. These dogmas and the history of their development are therefore worthy of dispassionate study, for they also provide insights into how history could have been otherwise, perhaps a little less inharmonious.

The Christians, in the beginning, were persecuted by the Jews, though Jesus got the title of Christ—the anointed one—in accordance with Isaiah's prophecy. Romans persecuted them till the fourth century, and in that period and for the next two centuries Christian history is replete with internecine quarrels among different sects and individuals trying to gain ascendancy with denouncements, killings, expulsions, and exiles. The theological debates mainly centred on the nature of Christ—whether human or divine or both—and the nature of Mother Mary. She was most prominent in the Coptic Church, and she still is—for she had gone to Alexandria with the child Jesus. She is painted in dark colours in the very old early Coptic Church in Cairo. Elsewhere in the Christian Church, the female aspect of divinity was downplayed, although many of the early churches were built on 'pagan' sites of mother worship, and in many of them an altar to a Black Madonna can be found where pilgrims pay obeisance. For example, in the great cathedral of Chartres, a black Madonna statue stands atop a fifteen-foot-high pillar, drawing a steady stream of pilgrims. A second Madonna statue exists in the underground crypt next to an ancient and sacred well. The story is that it was a pre-Christian holy site of a mother goddess, and when the Christian missionaries broke down the existing shrine and built the cathedral, they did

not or could not destroy the mother goddess, and so accepted her as a 'pre-figuration' of the Virgin Mary. The idea of female divinity was downplayed in the Catholic Church, so as to fully divorce the flesh from the the spirit, thus enabling the idea of the immaculate conception. Woman as woman was made unholy, making it possible to oust the pagans and the Neo-Platonists. Some of the early paintings of Mary—one of them reputedly painted by St Luke—show her colour as dark brown. She progressively became white as she went farther north. In the medieval French town of Le Puy there is a high and holy hill that served as a pre-Christian sacred site of a mother goddess, where the worship of the Virgin Mary started at a very early date. On the main altar of the cathedral that was built there, there is a statue of a Black Madonna with child. In the Middle Ages, five popes and fifteen kings came to see her, as did the mother of Joan of Arc, walking all the way from the west of France to pray for her daughter. The cathedral has been renovated many times, but all through, the Black Madonna has stayed.

Sometime in the history of Christianity the Christian armies were given a second cross—the hilt and guard of their swords. They prayed to the God of love, raising their killing swords. The female divinity was further downplayed in the Middle Ages, and virtues like tolerance, acceptance, and creativity atrophied.

Islam was the last Semitic religion to come from the same tree; in its turn it judged the other two. In Islamic doctrine there were five major prophets before Muhammad—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Islam never considered Jesus as God or Son of God or any part of divinity, but as a prophet like Muhammad, and says that the crucifixion and resurrection never happened. The Christians hated Jews because they betrayed Christ, and they hated Muslims because they summarily dismissed Christ's divinity. Actually, Christians also could not decide on the divinity of Christ till the fourth century; they finally settled for the trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. So Muslims accuse them of subverting the One God. The Muslims also hat-

ed the Jews for they betrayed Muhammad's trust.

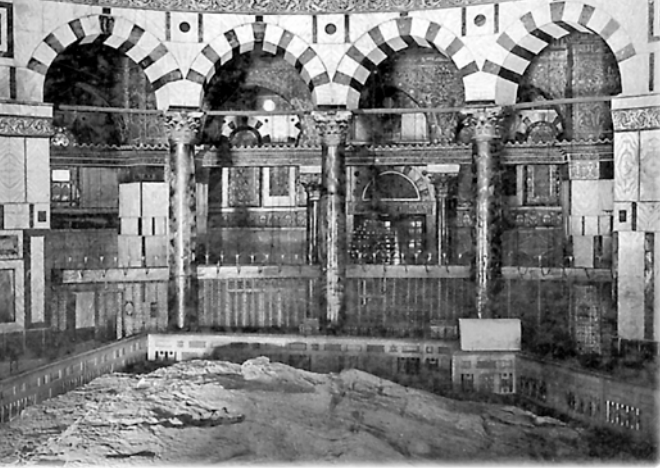
### **Politics and Spirituality**

The three Semitic religions share a common root, and have all originated from the sufferings of the poor and downtrodden. But they differ in their ethics, politics, and military strategy, which were connected to religion in both Islam and Christianity until present times—when reason and pragmatism prevailed over the opposition of the church in Christian nations, but not in Islamic ones. Islam judges other religions, and naturally it also is judged. Sadly, the most audible replies today are coming, not from the humanism and spirituality that exist in Islam, but through fatwas and fundamentalism. One cannot help wondering where God is in all this.

God is the destination of all religions. All Semitic religions have produced people of high spiritual attainment, people who feel close to God. All disputes are at the level of theologians, as to who are the true believers of the one God. Jews suffered most, having come first. In Medina, Muhammad beheaded six hundred Jews—mostly the rich citizens—and sold their families as slaves. They

*Via Dolorosa—  
sixth station  
(Veronica  
wipes Jesus's  
face)*





*Dome of the Rock, interior*

were accused of conspiring with the people of Mecca who were opposing him.

The surprising thing about the Prophet Muhammad is that he succeeded in inserting himself and Islam in the heritage of the Old Testament three thousand years after Abraham, depending on the name of Ishmael, Abraham's child by Hagar, the Egyptian bonded maid of Abraham's wife Sarah, and through his own dream of being lifted to heaven from the horse on Mount Moriah, thus staking his claim on Palestine. Believers say this was a miracle of God, non-believers say it was clever politics. Whichever it was, it is astounding that a tradition could insert a man into a mythological epic after three thousand years! One can only say, inscrutable are the ways of God—and so are those of history and human evolution. Unfortunately, this failed to foster the brotherly feelings that one would expect within a common tradition.

Islam started off by uniting Arab tribes, and then spread with the sword—this is common to all Semitic religions including Judaism. Other tribes joined Islam later. The world was tribal when they started, and in large parts it still is. Many of the converts to Islam were oppressed people who found the tenets and practices of Islam liberating.

Rationalism and theology are posterior to the prophetic stage of any religion; they also came to Islam, but seem to have undergone a decline after the early golden centuries of Islamic history. All Semitic religions lay great importance on dogma and ritual, not understanding them as one of the many pathways to God. Neither has the concept

of a supra-denominational God—benevolent to and approachable by all humankind—been granted acceptance. The Sufi saints of Persia and India, yearning for a personal union with God, found the externalities of law divorced from a personal theology unsatisfactory, and increasingly asserted a way (*tariqah*) and goal (*haqiqah*) alternative to those of the Sharia. Their messages, poetry, and songs helped bridge religious divides by their beauty and universality. In India, both Hindus and Muslims pay homage at the mausolea of Sufi saints. But the role of people like Kabir, Lalan, and many others has been largely inconsequential in the mainstream Islamic social and political culture even in India. Many Sufi saints, like Mazhar Jan-e-Janaan, said that Hindus were *ahlul kitab* (people of the book), thus respecting the Vedas and Vedanta as divine words; but this view did not gain wide acceptance. An individual approach to divinity, deemphasizing the exclusiveness associated with specific religious practices and conceptions of God, is essential if religious divides are to be bridged.

Early Christian sects like the Gnostics, Manicheans, and Nestorians had some special insights into the nature of truth—but were vigorously opposed and subdued. The last two reached many remote areas of Asia. Neo-Platonists were active in Alexandria and Rome in the 3rd and 4th centuries; their philosophy was akin to Advaita Vedanta. Their best known philosopher, Plotinus (205–270), is said to have had mystic experience that in Indian philosophical language would qualify as *samadhi*. He led a frugal life in Rome, talking to people and helping those in distress, regardless of their social standing, with total detachment. His last words were to the following effect: 'I am trying to bring back the divine in us to the divine in the All'.

There have been highly evolved spiritual personalities in the Christian tradition—Saint Francis of Assisi was one such—but the foibles and failings of the Church have been equally glaring. The Inquisition of the Middle Ages that virtually hunted down all heresy, real or imagined, and the opposition of the Church to scientific development are cases in

point. Even today the Christian Church finds it difficult to come to terms with modern advancements in the physical sciences and biology. These modern developments apparently conflict with the concept that God created this world and has a plan for it, an idea that all Semitic religions propound. But the true problem lies with the people trying to work out God's mind.

Dissatisfaction with narrow organized religion with its set ideas, coupled with the new socio-economic and scientific scenario, gradually brought in the secular belief in the primacy of humans, of their intellects and minds. This humanistic trend, set in motion during the Renaissance, continues unabated. But a 'supra-religious' understanding of human divinity still remains largely foreign to much of humanity.

Jews have had the least chance of doing harm to others after the destruction of their ancient kingdoms, but they have suffered the most, and their cloistered refugee life has repeatedly raised suspicions that they are conspirators against the lands they inhabit. Since their earliest history they have been divided into clans and tribes, and 'conspiring Jews' had almost become a metaphor. Through their long history in Israel and outside in different nations—through wars, occupation, and torture—they had no means to protect themselves, apart from intrigues for or against whomever was ruling. But all this aside, in their countries of adoption, they have produced great men and women in arts and science. They now have a homeland of their own to defend. This task has integrated the different socio-religious factions into nationhood and in a common search for a secular identity.

The Israeli society of today is different from the one I saw in 1980. Israelis have further developed Hebrew for modern usage both in general education and science, but most speak English—though not necessarily with an American accent, as I had found in 1980. If they think today that political and military strength are as important, if not more so, than their philosophies, can we blame them? Conflicts in the Middle East have a historical precedent

of 'fight to the finish', one way or the other, and this is due to their basis in religion. Is that acceptable in today's shrunken global world? Humankind has to develop and accept secular beliefs, not attacking others or their own weaker sections with age-old divisive religious ethics. Can this be done? On that wisdom depends the hope of humanity.

### ***The Pilgrim Wends His Way Home***

I still have one more thing to do: I have not been to any mosque in Israel. So I stand in front of the mosque of Abul Abbas in Alexandria dressed in my very Indian outfit of white pyjama and kurta. I ask the Muslims milling around me whether I can go inside. They say I can but at the time of Ramadan it is very crowded and I shall have difficulty. They are right. I have been to many mosques and enjoyed the serenity inside, but I do not know the rituals of prayer. So I say I can pay my respects from where I am standing, and join my hands in pranam: and an unexplained tremor runs through me. I draw immediate attention, and people ask whether I am Indian and of which religion. I say I am a Hindu and consider everybody's God as mine. They say God is one and I nod in agreement, even as I wonder which aspect of God am I agreeing to? God is a multifaceted personality or else the world would not have been so diverse. In this huge, largely empty, universe with no evidence of life near us, so much diversity in nature and life forms exists on this tiny dot of a planet called earth—like a reserve forest, a garden—and we the tinier dots paint God with the colour of our emotions and fight in God's garden!

A man in a spotless white outfit and turban comes forward and says he also is Indian—from Kerala, and is pursuing Islamic studies at Cairo University. He asks my name and what I do. I am lost in my thoughts; so I give him my card unmindfully. 'Oh, you are a doctor,' he says and pockets the card. Later I regret giving my card to a man who did not introduce himself. I was distracted because at the mosque of Abul Abbas they were not covering their heads, and when I asked, they said it was not mandatory, it is not in the scriptures. I have seen

many variations of ritual in the same religion from country to country, place to place. I was thinking of Ruth asking me at dinner, 'Don't you believe in rituals?' I replied, 'Yes, of course, but not absolutely.' I was not speaking philosophically, just on the basis of what I have seen. Ruth almost shouted, 'What! You do not believe in God?' Before I could reply, Joe said gravely, 'Yes, he believes in God.'

### **Why?**

God cannot be abolished, despite the efforts of atheists and agnostics, for He is connected to the sublime perceptions of humanity proclaimed by the sages of every religion since antiquity. These perceptions are the proof of existence of the indefinable all-pervasive superior consciousness, that consciousness which is the basis of the humanism of Plotinus, St Francis, Kabir, and many others. This whole phenomenon has been given the name God. But religion is inextricably mixed up with the worldly affairs of humanity! It is probably in the nature of creation that the sublime and the ridiculous must exist side by side. In ordinary times people are calm, wise, and helpful, much like God himself. But come dispute, and religion is used to whip up passion and the devil in people.

I stood thinking, facing the endless western desert of Egypt extending to the horizon and beyond in the blazing midday sun. It is a sea of sand and rock extending beyond the range of vision. I could see the endless universe filled with the same grains of sand. Is it my imagination that collapses these grains into mirages of stars, galaxies, jungles, seas, cities, palaces, and the works of human vanity? Is there nothing but these grains collapsing into the realities of my desires by means of my imagination? But my imagination, my consciousness is also a product of the grains, and those grains must hold the same consciousness as I do. I cannot be a freak in this universe when nothing else is.

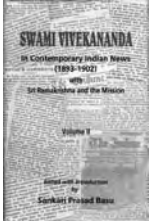
My mind is in turmoil, I am lost in thought. Must humanity always grow through violence, war, and bloodshed, and never in peace and tranquillity? A voice within seems to whisper—'You could not

come to me as a child, you were not ready. You are grown and ready now. Go you into that vast desert, as others have gone before you, naked to your skin, for there is none but you, there is nothing, no tree to lean on, no branches on which to hang your desires that are continually reborn like the waves of the sea, in the little pieces of cloth, little bits of paper stuck into crevices, no shade to sit in, to relax in for comfort. Go not in your name and image lest they make you a saint as an excuse to wallow in their imagined imperfections. You go rushing in a hundred, a thousand, a million names and images. And tell them that the religions I gave over the aeons of time were not meant to serve as shrouds for desires, lusts, ambitions, and vanity. Take those exotic fabrics I gave and wipe off everything they have been stained with and wash them with your tears. They will ask, what shall we do with a God that does not give us what we desire, no gold, and no fulfilments that please us? Tell them that these were given to clear the darkness of their minds, for them to come to me. Gold I have given them aplenty. They have stashed all that gold in temples and mosques and cathedrals built in my name and in the modern temples of state vaults and they have issued papers instead as wealth—papers with imaginary values they have created; the values that float on the machines they have made of currencies and stocks and bonds made and manipulated by people. My children in the four corners of the earth starve and die, remain ignorant and unable to understand why; the simple people, they do not understand how the tidal waves of values are made and destroyed by the vanities and lusts of humanity and they remain ignorant of the nobility in humanity created from the dust in my image that even I salute, and I cry for them. And they rise up in revolt and kill and destroy, epoch after epoch. How many times have you seen the gold vanish, the papers dwindling to dust cheaper than a cigarette butt, baby's tear, mother's milk, and they never learn? Take away that shroud of religion, reveal Me, and let them see their selves in nakedness before the apocalypse comes, so that they are saved. And they will see.'



# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications.



**Swami Vivekananda in  
Contemporary Indian News  
(1893-1902), Volume II**  
Ed. Sankari Prasad Basu

Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture,  
Gol Park, Kolkata 700 029. E-mail:  
rmic@vsnl.com. 2007. xlv + 877 pp.  
Rs 500.

The ideals for which Swami Vivekananda stood in his lifetime have a special relevance in contemporary India, where the vast majority of people—heirs to the wisdom of Vedanta—have lost their spiritual moorings. This loss is strongly indicated by the very small number of Indians who have read the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana, even in translation. The book under review does not expound Vedanta as preached by Swamiji—whose knowledge of its spiritual message was as profound as his articulation of it was soul-stirring. It shows how contemporary media perceived him and what he stood for. In other words, it presents a media-mirror image of Swamiji's mission, giving an idea not only of what it was, but also of the public's and intelligentsia's response towards it.

Professor Sankari Prasad Basu, who was assisted in compiling material, conducting research, and in other ways by Bimal Kumar Ghosh, Lakshmi Kanta Boral, and Santi Prasad Ghosal, is a distinguished scholar known for his painstaking research. It is hardly surprising then that his introduction to the work under review should bear the stamp of academic rigour of a high order. Apart from this, what lends a special significance to the collection is that the pieces—covering a diverse journalistic terrain that includes reports, book reviews, letters to the editor, editorials, and obituary notices on Swamiji's passing—are extracted from various organs of the Anglo-Indian press. The latter, as Professor Basu points out, were 'mouthpiece[s] of the political and commercial interests of British rule in India' (9). However, despite Swamiji's strident exposition of

Indian nationalism and opposition to British rule, he 'earned grudging admiration from these papers. That proves the mighty power of the man and his message' (ibid.).

The Anglo-Indian newspapers from which pieces have been taken include the *Madras Mail*, the *Madras Times*, the *Statesman*, the *Englishman*, the *Times of India*, the *Bombay Gazette*, and the *Pioneer*. Professor Basu, however, does not take a blinkered approach to such publications. Thus he writes, 'The *Madras Times*, as an Anglo-Indian newspaper, though never challenged the Heaven Ordained right of the British to rule India and offered necessary support to European groups it represented, nevertheless, expressed genuine concern for Indian causes, and in some cases valiantly fought against the bureaucratic misrule which had inflicted insufferable misery to the subject people' (25).

One would doubtless notice here, and at a number of other places, a bit of verbosity and some archaic turns of phrase. Purple passages are not infrequent. There are places where Professor Basu is carried away by his emotions and the tone becomes polemical instead of being academic. All this, however, is outweighed by the wealth of information he provides. More important, he does not just mechanically reproduce pieces and extracts, arranging them subject-wise, but locates them in the flow of contemporary history, linking them with unfolding social and economic developments or to particular events. The result not only reveals insights into how the Anglo-Indian press viewed Swamiji, other Indians, the country, and its society, but also grants a view of unfolding Indian history at the high noon of the British empire.

The book embodies years of research, which sometimes required such hard physical labour as hauling down old files of the *Madras Mail* and *Madras Times* from ancient stacks in the publications' library, where employees were on a go-slow strike. Preparation of the manuscript itself took five years. The result is a volume that is rich in information. It ought to be read widely, especially by the country's

youth, many of whom need to be reminded of their own profound spiritual legacy.

Hiranmay Karlekar  
Consultant Editor, *The Pioneer*



**The Nature of the Whole:  
Holism in Ancient Greek and  
Indian Medicine**

Vicki Pitman

Motilal Banarasidas, 41 U A Bungalow  
Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007. E-  
mail: [mlbd@vsnl.com](mailto:mlbd@vsnl.com). 2006. xxiv + 242 pp.  
Rs 495.

Holistic medicine is a concept that has been much in vogue recently. It takes into consideration the spiritual, emotional, and mental needs of patients, besides the physical. The popular belief is that Ayurveda and other complementary and alternative medical systems are based on a holistic approach, whereas allopathy, based on the Greek tradition of Hippocrates, the father of Western medicine, has a reductionist outlook, focussing mainly on the 'parts' of the patient or on parts of the disease. In this book, which is essentially a dissertation for MPhil in Complementary Health Studies at Exeter University, the author dives deep and traces holism within the Hippocratic *Corpus*—a group of treatises written by Western physicians of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.

To establish her thesis, the author has extensively reviewed *Charaka Samhita*—the monumental work of Charaka, the Indian Ayurvedic physician, with respect to the basic principles of the three *doshas* (triple humours) and the Ayurvedic approach to diet, cooking, digestion, quality of food, and pathology of disease. She then proceeds to discuss what ancient European physicians have to say on these issues. The striking similarities between the two systems in their basic principles, physiology, and pathology of diseases and their cure are narrated in the four main chapters of the book. Ample references from various Western treatises which explicitly ascribe health to the mental-emotional state of the individual and to proper diet are quoted. A glossary of technical terms, exhaustive bibliography, and index enhance the value of the book.

This scholarly research work will provide new insights to medical practitioners, medical historians, cultural anthropologists, and also to health-conscious people interested in knowing the fundamentals of

the Eastern and Western health-care systems.

Dr Chetana Mandavia  
Professor of Plant Physiology  
Junagadh Agricultural University, Junagadh



**The Sterling Book of  
Indian Classical Dances**

Shovana Narayan

New Dawn Press, A 59 Okhla Industrial  
Area, Phase II, New Delhi 110 020.  
Email: [info@sterlingpublishers.com](mailto:info@sterlingpublishers.com). 2007.  
78 pp. Rs 99.

There was an urgent need for an informative brochure about various classical Indian dance forms to bridge the gulf between scholars and specialist artistes and the common audience eager to learn the technical aspects of these reputed forms. Shovana Narayan's booklet satisfies this need admirably. In eight different chapters, Narayan has dwelt upon eight traditional Indian dance forms: Bharatnatyam from Tamil Nadu and neighbouring regions, Kathak from the Indo-Gangetic belt, Kathakali and Mohiniyattam from Kerala, Manipuri from Manipur, Kuchipudi from Andhra Pradesh, Odissi from Orissa, and Sattriya from Assam. She traces the origin and development of each style. The presentation format, salient movements and postures, music, and costume are unique for each of these forms. Understanding these helps the amateur to train his or her mind to appreciate the artistic beauty present in physical forms, mental modifications, and in the humble supplication of the dancer at the feet of the divine. Shovana Narayan's book brings her readers to the consciousness of an ever-pulsating 'principle' in every atom of the universe.

PB

**BOOK RECEIVED**



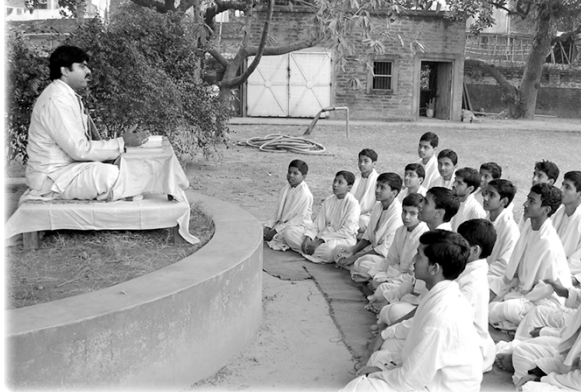
**Five Principal Upani ads**  
Acharya Narasimha

Penman Publishers, 7308, Prem Nagar,  
Shakti Nagar, Delhi 110 007. E-mail:  
[penmanbooks@yahoo.co.in](mailto:penmanbooks@yahoo.co.in). 2007. viii +  
495 pp. Rs 950.

Exhaustive commentary in English on Isha, Kena, Katha, Taittiriya, and Mundaka Upanishads with the Sanskrit original, transliteration and translation of mantras, and an annotated exposition.

# REPORTS

*Students of  
Vivekananda  
Veda Vidyalaya,  
Belur Math,  
in class*



## **Vivekananda University 2nd Convocation**

The second convocation of **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University** was held at the university's Coimbatore faculty centre on 8 September 2007. Dr R Chidambaram, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, delivered the convocation address. Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and chancellor of the university, presided over the function and presented degree and diploma certificates to 74 successful candidates of the Faculty of Disability Management and Special Education, in the presence of a large number of teachers, staff, students, and academicians.

## **Teachers' Meet**

A teachers' meet was organized at **Ramakrishna Mission, Narottam Nagar**, on 5 September, on the theme 'Educational Ethics'. 98 teachers from 16 different schools participated in the meet. Swami Suhitanandaji, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided.

In his welcome address, Swami Ishatmanandaji, secretary of the institution, emphasized the need to integrate ethical values in education. In his keynote address, Sri P P Shrivastav, member of the North-East Council, thanked the management of Ramakrishna Mission for holding such meaningful discussions. He praised the Ramakrishna Mission for its uninterrupted service in the field of education to Arunachalis for the last 35 years, and appealed to the gathering to emulate the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Swami Suhitanandaji, in his presidential address, called upon the teachers to work for the regeneration of India.

Sixteen teachers representing different schools shared their views, and pledged to work together to promote the values of India's rich cultural heritage in the student community

## **Achievements**

Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, at its convocation held in New Delhi on 12 September, awarded six gold medals to five students of **Vivekananda Veda Vidyalaya, Belur Math**, for securing all-India first ranks in Purva Madhyama (equivalent to Secondary) and Uttara Madhyama (equivalent to Higher Secondary) examinations held in the years 2005, 2006, and 2007.

Sri D D Lapang, Chief Minister, Meghalaya, presented the 'State Award for Teachers' to Sri I P S Kharlukhi, Headmaster of the secondary school at Myllem under **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Cherrapunjee**, at a function held in Shillong on 5 September, National Teachers' Day.

All twenty students of the degree college of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur**, who appeared in MSc (Chemistry) Part II Examination conducted by the college passed with first class marks. This was the College's first postgraduate batch. The College's student who secured the first rank in BSc (Statistics) examination also secured the top position in the entire Science (Honours) group this year, creating a new record in the Calcutta University Statistics Honours examination.

## **News from Branch Centres**

**Chennai Vidyapith** organized a week-long function from 5 to 11 September to mark the concluding phase of its diamond jubilee celebrations. Sri

E S L Narasimhan, Governor of Chattisgarh, Sri R L Bhatia, Governor of Kerala, Sri Surjit Singh Barnala, Governor of Tamil Nadu, Sri A P Shah, Chief Justice of Madras High Court, and several other distinguished persons, including alumni of the vidyapith, addressed the public meetings organized on this occasion.

**Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban**, organized a devotees' convention and spiritual retreat from 12 to 14 September as a part of its centenary celebrations, in which about 250 devotees participated.

**Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad**, celebrated the Silver Jubilee of its temple consecration, its Vivekananda Institute of Languages, and its Vivekananda Health Centre from 28 to 30 September. As part of the Silver Jubilee, two youth conventions, a teachers' convention, and a devotees' convention were held. Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the programme, delivered benedictory addresses at the conventions, and released a set of two mp3 CDs containing the Mahabharata Shanti Parva lectures of Swami Ranganathananda. In all, about 4,800 persons, including 53 monastics, attended the function.

### **Flood Relief**

Centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in Assam, Bihar, Orissa, and West Bengal continued flood relief operations in affected areas. Details of relief materials distributed during the last month are as follows.

**Assam** · Guwahati: 75 kg bleaching powder, 10 litres phenol, and 25,000 halogen tablets to 250 families of Chandrapur and Magurpara areas; 100 mosquito-nets, 100 blankets, and 100 tins of milk powder to 200 families of 25 villages in Kamrup district; medical treatment to 550 persons. Karimganj: 760 kg rice, 63 kg dal, 63 kg salt, and 25 litres mustard oil to 126 families in Karimganj. Silchar: 10,000 kg rice, 2,000 kg dal, 2,000 kg salt, 320 kg chira, 70 kg gur, 839 dhotis, 81 saris, 839 packets of candles, and 200,000 halogen tablets to 1,919 families in 24 remote villages and shelter camps in Borkhola, Dholai,

and Silchar constituencies in Cachar district; and medical treatment to 10,353 persons.

**Bihar** · Patna: 25,500 kg chira, 10,000 kg gur, 40,000 biscuit packets, 2,660 kg *sattu*, 4,000 dhotis, 4,500 saris, 4,000 children's garments, 6,000 candles, 6,000 matchboxes, and 250,000 halogen tablets to 5,532 families belonging to 79 villages of three blocks in Darbhanga, Samastipur, and Muzaffarpur districts; and cooked food for 1,000 flood-affected persons for 20 days.

**Orissa** · Bhubaneswar: 1,615 bed sheets, towels, saris, and dhotis to 1,665 families of 12 villages in Jajpur, Balasore, and Cuttack districts.

**West Bengal** · Belgharia: 500 biscuit packets and 60,000 halogen tablets to 300 families; 2,000 kg chira, 200 kg sugar, 860 biscuit packets, 500 five-litre bottles of drinking water, and 360,000 halogen tablets to 500 families; khichri and 18 kg baby food to 366 families; and 1,740 kg chira, 175 kg sugar, 682 biscuit packets, 341 five-litre bottles of drinking water, and 72,740 halogen tablets to 341 families in Rajibnagar, Kolkata. Cooch Behar: 3,388 kg chira, 1,375 kg sugar, and 400,000 halogen tablets to 3,335 persons of Tufanganj and Mathabhanga sub-divisions in Cooch Behar district. Kamarpukur: 10,000 kg chira, 2,230 kg sugar, 1,250 kg bleaching powder, 11,800 kg lime, and 100,000 halogen tablets among 10,000 families of Khanakul II block in Hooghly district; and tube-well disinfection and other sanitation programmes in some affected areas. Kankurgachhi: Khichri to 2,500 persons in and around Kankurgachhi for one day. Malda: Khichri for 3 days to 1,256 persons belonging to 3 areas of Manikchak block in Malda district; 5 kg biscuits to the children of these areas. Manasadwip: 55 kg chira and 20 kg gur to 241 persons belonging to 3 villages of Ganga Sagar block in South 24-Parganas district. Rahara: Khichri and 28,000 halogen tablets to 1,398 persons belonging to Shantinagar and Anandanagar areas in North 24-Parganas district. Saradapitha: 22,300 plates of khichri to people of Amta II block; 22,500 kg chira and 1,800 kg sugar to 6,750 families of Udaynarayanpur block in Howrah district. Sargachhi: 1,600 kg chira and 160 kg sugar to 1,600 persons of Jalangi block in Murshidabad district.

**Bangladesh** · Baliati, Chattagram (Chittagong), Comilla, Dhaka, Dinajpur, Habiganj, Mymensingh, Narayanganj, and Sylhet centres distributed 2,000 metric tons of rice to 417,155 flood-affected people in 28 districts of Bangladesh in the months of June and July.

